













# **Folklorists of Bengal**

**Life-sketches and Bibliographical Notes**

**|| ONE ||**

**By Sankar Sen Gupta**

**Foreword by Hiranmay Banerji,  
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**Introduction by Asok Mitra,  
Registrar General of India, New Delhi.**

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## CONTENTS

	Page
<i>Foreword</i> ...	VII
<i>Author's Preface</i> ...	IX
<i>Introduction</i> ...	XVII
Lal Behari Day ...	1
Rabindranath Tagore ...	22
Saratchandra Mitra ...	53
Dineshchandra Sen ...	89
Dakshinaranjan Mitra-Majumdar ...	111
Gurusaday Dutt ...	127
Kedarnath Majumdar ...	152
Chandrakumar De ...	164
<i>Index</i> ...	177

## PHOTOS

Plate		Facing Page
Lal Behari Day	... ..	1
Rabindranath Tagore	... ..	22
Saratchandra Mitra	... ..	52
Dineshchandra Sen	... ..	88
Dakshinaranjan Mitra-Majumdar	... ..	110
Gurusaday Dutt	... ..	126
Kedarnath Majumdar	... ..	152
Chandrakumar De	... ..	164

## FOREWORD

Sri Sankar Sengupta has honoured me by asking to write a foreword for this book. After going through the Introduction written by Sri Asok Mitra, however, which is both able and comprehensive, I find that I have very little to say about it. Sri Mitra's Introduction has not only referred to the background but also dealt with the contents and even referred to its small blemishes. In the circumstances, I find, the only way I can fulfil his wish is by adding a supplement to indicate the possible uses of this valuable book.

As the title indicates, the book deals with some eminent folklorists of Bengal who have richly contributed to our knowledge of folklore. None of them were wholly interested in folk culture and consequently, to none of them it was a wholetime occupation. Nevertheless, they were interested deeply enough in the subject to be able to make rich contributions to its knowledge. That is the common bond that has brought them together in this book. The treatment followed for the eight folklorists who find place in this book, is more or less the same. We get the biography first and then an account of the achievements and lastly, there is a bibliography of books and articles left by them touching on the subject of folklore and even other subjects. There is departure from this pattern of treatment understandably, in respect of Rabindranath Tagore. He is too vast a subject to be squeezed into a chapter of this medium-sized book. So the biographical account has been limited to his activities more or less in the field of folklore and rural reconstruction. Similarly, the bibliography, is selectively limited to these subjects. In respect of others in contrast the bibliography is fairly exhaustive.

Interest in folklore in our country is steadily on the increase. This is actuated both by academic as well as practical motives. Perhaps, the horizon of the scholar interested in the study of man is widening, opening out to him underground roots of culture which had so far remained undiscovered. Similarly, the Planner and the Social Educationist have realised that a deeper study of man helps them to discharge their functions more effectively. Such men interested in sociological and anthropological studies will find in this book a rich store house of information which can give clues for the discovery of raw materials in subjects selected by them for special study. In this respect, I am glad to find, the author has spared no pains in making his bibliography as exhaustive as possible. We may, for example, refer to the contributions of Saratchandra Mitra. It appears that he had not published any books but his writings lie scattered about in form of essays contributed to different journals. As many as 408 of them have been traced out and listed in this book. There are good reasons to hope, therefore, that the book will be received well by the public, and I commend it to the reading public without hesitation.

Calcutta  
19th February 1965.

**Hiranmay Banerji**

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

The author does not offer any apology for the contents of this little volume and placing it in the hands of the public. He is not a scholar nor has he any pretentious position in the society. In a country like India where even the majority of the intelligentsia believe in the cult of *Guru*, freedom from any such influence may appear to be queer enough, but the author always believes in thinking for himself and from the conviction of his own thinking these life-sketches are discussed. He believes that the readers will accept this volume in the spirit in which it has been treated.

It is well-known that works on different branches of folklore are being published in bulks for years, mostly in Bengali. So those who are unlearned in this language can have little opportunity to know what work has been done in the field of folklore research in Bengal. The non-Bengali readers are, however, acquainted so far only with some of the works of the authors who have brought out English versions of Bengali folklore or have rendered into English some of its items which are very few in number and, however well done, necessarily lack the original flavour. In some places it suffers from reality in that the renderings have been done without taking into careful consideration the working of the folk mind, feeling and diction of the folk people. These life-sketches together with the appended notes will illuminate to the readers some valuable works on folklore study in Bengal.

Let us not disagree that in the rigid sense of the term there is no folklorist in Bengal. If so, why this attempt? Correct! But is it not true that instances are not rare where scholars, eminent persons and diligent workers devoted much of their time for collection, selection and publication of folklore materials? Were not some of them absorbed in deep studies in folklore? These people



have done pioneer work. Might be, most of them were not well acquainted with scientific discipline and treatment of folklore, but is it not true that the scientific treatment or analysis of folklore is a subject of modern school of thought? On account of our weak retentive faculty we forget very quickly things which are fit to be remembered. This does not ultimately seem to be beneficial. It is our duty to discharge the debt we owe to our spiritual guides by remembering, at least, their lives and works.

These life-sketches have been treated here from the point of view of folklore study only, which may be a partial portrayal of their lives, leaving aside their full statures, and may be lop-sided. Activities of the personages described here were varied and a full-length life-sketch is due to almost all of them.

India has given a go-by to foreign domination and got rid of all restraint on our self-determination. As a result, folkloristic study in this country is tending to take a stride. It is significant that in different States of India and Eastern Pakistan its study in all its aspects is gradually gaining in importance. We are glad to see that some Universities have included one or two papers on folklore in their curriculum for the Post-Graduate studies with the subjects of languages or with Anthropology. The departments of Museology, Archaeology, Sociology, Psychology, Ancient Indian History & Culture, Indology, Tribal Culture & Folklore Research are also training their students on some aspects of folklore which are to come within their scope of study and thereby advancing the cause. It is high time for us to assess and rehash the folkloristic work done. In doing so, it is necessary to be well-acquainted with the past folklorists and their works. So we have planned to compile the life-sketches of the regional folklorists which will depict their lives and works as faithfully as possible.

Nobody can deny, from a natural impulse a handful of talents and socio-literary workers and scholars have collected huge folkloristic materials—some have published them in coherent book forms and others in loose tales in periodicals.

Neither before the independence of India did the act of collection take a definite course. Given independence, there has been no attempt to scrutinize the import of folklore to the modern society, neither there has been any effort to study folkloristic materials from psycho-socio-bio-folklorological points of view. To study the folklore of Bengal from all its aspects, it is desirable to divide it into groups and study it in the following manner : (i) tales, legends, myths, etc. (ii) *chhadās* (nursery rhymes), linguistics, (iii) riddles, erotic folklore (iv) songs and dances, (v) proverbs, maxims, anecdotes, folkways (vi) religions, rituals, rites, ceremonies, beliefs, customs, festivals, folk-gods & goddesses (vii) folk-drama, speeches (viii) dresses, ornaments, utensils, arts & crafts and (ix) behaviour, manner, thoughts and ideas and so on.

This volume is a treatment of lives of the folklorists, based on information derived not unoften from old and stray sources. Every attempt has been made to ascertain the facts set forth here from authentic sources. Yet it cannot be said in the light of the fact that things simulant of facts have not crept into it. A glaring mistake came to the attention of the author in the 'Bibliographical Notes' of the article on 'Saratchandra Mitra'. It was detected while cataloguing, his articles appeared in "The Journal of Anthropological Society of Bombay" that the years printed in pages 60 to 70 are not correct. One word more for the non-Bengali readers. In many cases the author had to use Bengali era (B.S.). The simple formula to find out the corresponding Christian era is to add the number 593 to the Bengali era to come at the corresponding Christian era. The readers may also have here and there in this volume a smack of fault of some nature. The Publishers sincerely regret all these. They frankly admit that the bungling of the press authorised to print the book, led to such a pass that it was once decided to abandon the idea of publishing this volume altogether.

The author is conscious of his limitations and frailties,

yet he promises to remedy all defects of printing and points of fact to which his attention may be drawn in future edition. He also regrets the use in its pages of both the conventional and phonetic spellings 'Saurabh' as well as 'Saurav', *Mymensingh Gitika* and *Maimansinha-gitika* and the absence of diacritical marks where necessary, which cannot be remedied before the next print.

It may not be out of place to mention that this volume is an effort to set up a string of bibliographies, in preparing which the author found himself at a disadvantage, because he could not be successful in all cases in his hunt for some old and extinct periodicals in which the writings of the public characters of this book are said to have appeared. So, after some period of tiresome work in vain, he had to cease to run after untraceable details, which, if incorporated on the strength of words of mouth, would show off, what is far from the intention of the author, the amount of so-called labour and scholarship employed in it. When this venture has been baffling for the commoners, needless to say, it would be none the better for the general readers. Had one made capital out of the oral evidence from some persons known to be well informed, that could have been a sham enrichment to the size. Then, the last but not the least, the cost of production of this book would have been unnecessarily higher. Time has thus been spent after wild-goose chase much to the annoyance of the author.

The book has been divided into two main parts, the first part gives in a nut-shell a picture of lives and activities of the respective folklorists and the second part consists of the 'bibliographical notes'.

The author believes that this 'Bibliographical Notes'\* have enriched the book, although it could not

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\* A discriminating reader may be glad to know that an exhaustive bibliography of Indian Folklore Studies is under preparation, the *pro forma* copy of which would be brought out in 1965, which will contain select books and articles appeared in English. This bibliography would be edited by Sankar Sen Gupta and Shyam Parmar jointly.

be made uniformly informative for reasons of materials and time wanting. It was not possible to look into the manuscript after December, 1962 except for revision the copy of Chandrakumar De in August, 1963. So some useful information might have been overlooked.

As has been said before, persons of whom we are interested here are all versatile geniuses. Lal Behari Day who tops the list in this volume had so much of qualities of head and heart that had he not written the book "Folk tales of Bengal" or "Bengal Peasant Life", still then he could be well remembered for his unique service to the cause of Christianity and as an educator. It is needless to comment on the life and works of Tagore. Saratchandra Mitra, the third essay of this volume, was a lawyer by profession and for some time a professor of the Calcutta University in the Department of Anthropology, but his collection of folklore, rituals, tales, and other field-works and ability to present folklorological materials in socio-cultural perspective for the reading public has placed him in a high esteem. Dr. Dineshchandra Sen was a teacher of repute and a research guide. His "Folk literature of Bengal" is definitely a result of his findings on "Eastern Bengal Ballads". Dr. Sen could not have raised the folklore of Bengal to present status had there been no field workers like Chandrakumar De. Dakshinaranjan Mitra-Majumdar, the fifth essay of this volume, had come from the folk stock. He was absolutely absorbed in folk and juvenile literature and was a self-taught teacher. His painstaking field work has ultimately won him the title of the emperor of folk-literature of Bengal. Gurusaday Dutt will ever be remembered for his establishing the Bratachari Society, initiating folk-dance movement and physical culture. His effort for the advancement of womenfolk will also be remembered. Kedarnath Majumdar discovered Chandrakumar De and had nursed a folk movement in Bengal through his journal "Saurabh". Kedarnath might not have remarkable publications on folklore to his credit, still we have dared include him in this series owing to his sincere love and services for

the subject. His fondness for folklore study can be proved by quoting various materials from his "Saurabh", now extinct. The author believes, this type of people is much more needed in the formative stage because they create workers, enthusiasm and love for the subject and ultimately are regarded as pioneers, whereas but for patronization many good workers lose interest to the detriment of the cause. So was Chandrakumar De inspired by Kedarnath. He is not to be considered well educated from the academic standard. But he was a true folklorist and had undoubtedly carved out his position by dint of his sincere and hard work.

Among the folklorists described in this volume are Gurusaday Dutt, Lal Behari Day, Saratchandra Mitra and Dineshchandra Sen, who can claim high academic distinction. Of these four, the latter three were professors and educators while the first was a member of the Indian Civil Service, which still now is considered as a prized cadre. The genius of Tagore is universally recognised. The rest three persons were devoted to writings or journalism. Although they had no university degree, still they were consulted by the eminent educators and scholars and are being referred for their specialised knowledge and scholarship.

The author has high hope that a fair number of superior talents who have much greater advantage to work in this field could have done it more efficiently, but he has yet to see somebody come forward to do this job and as the author could not put off his plan or leave it undone, he took up the project himself in spite of his inability. As a humble worker of folklore he had made this groundwork, anticipating the details of decoration shall be completed by men of higher calibre. It has been designed to convey a rough idea to zealous workers and researchers in the field of folklore and inspire into them a desire for fuller details and to take the initiative to bring out an exhaustive work.

The author owes his debt to the following persons in bringing this volume out :

Sri. Rashbehari Mandal, B. L. of Lal Behari Memorial

Committee and Janab Jahedali of the village of Sona Palasi. These two persons came to the relief of the author with some books and some copies of 'Bengal Magazine' in preparing the essay on Lal Behari Day.

Prof. Somendrachandra Basu, M.A., relieved him of the task of preparing the bibliographical notes of the essay on Rabindranath Tagore.

The idea of writing the life-sketch of Saratchandra Mitra was first infused into the author by his friend Smt. Durga Bhagvat, M.A. Sri Tinkari Mitra, the youngest son of Saratchandra Mitra, helped him with the information and supplying the *Kulapanjika* of the Mitra family of Hongal-kuria and the copies of bibliographical notes.

Dr. B. C. Sen, M.A. Ph, D, youngest son of Dr. D. C. Sen, helped the author with some information about the life and works of his father Dr. D. C. Sen.

Smt. Kalyani Shome supplied some materials useful to compile the life-sketch of her father Dakshinarajan Mitra-Majumdar.

Smt. Arati Dutt, daughter-in-law, Gurusaday Dutt, Dr. Jogeshchandra Mukerji, Treasurer, Indian Folklore Society, helped the author by supplying facts about Gurusaday Dutt.

The late artist Baikunthanath Das, a colleague and friend of Kedarnath, supplied facts about Kedarnath Majumdar.

Sri Pradipkumar De, the grandson of Chandrakumar De, supplied some materials and helped in compilation of the life-sketch of his grandfather. Subsequently, the author was much informed by the book "Bengali folk-ballads from Mymensingh" by Dr. Dusan Zbavitel.

The author is grateful to Sri Jogindranath Majumdar for supplying a group photograph of Chandrakumar De and his father from which our artist prepared the block appeared in this book. Sri Arun Ray supplied the photograph of Dr. D. C. Sen and Dakshinaranjan Mitra-Majumdar. Rabindra Bharati University was kind enough to permit to reproduce the portrait of Tagore while the Bengal Bratachari Society favoured the author with the portrait of Gurusaday Dutt.

The author thanks Sri Digambar Mahalanabis of BIS for his correcting the proof of the essay on Lal Behari Day. Sri Amarendra Mukhopadhyay has not only corrected all other proofs but also helped the author with his valuable suggestions. The author's sincerest thanks are primarily due to Sri Sarojranjan Biswas of the Controller's Office, Calcutta University, who helped the author with some translations from Bengali.

The author is grateful to Smt. Dipti Mahapatra, Dip. Lib. for preparing the Index.

The author acknowledges his debt to his artist friend Sri Subir Sen for the cover design.

The author also acknowledges his co-operation of Sri B. K. Ray, M. Com. of Nabasakti Press, and Sri A. K. Ghosh of Indian Publications.

It is the prized privilege of the author to receive an introduction from Sri Asok Mitra, ICS, Registrar General of India. The author owes much to Sri Mitra's graciousness in permitting this print to be published in its present form even though he would have preferred to reprint the entire book for its unsatisfactory printing when he said. "I do not wish that the value of your book should be so detracted from by the printer".

The author is much indebted to Sri Hiranmay Banerji, Rtd. ICS, Vice-chancellor, Rabindra Bharati University, for his ready consent to favour with a Foreword.

This volume is dedicated to Professor Dr. Heinz Mode for his useful service to the folklore of Bengal.

Sankar Sen Gupta

172/22, Acharya Jagadish Bose Road,  
Calcutta-14. February 15, 1965.

## INTRODUCTION

When in 1959 Sri Sankar Sengupta announced his forthcoming monthly journal *Folklore*,\* one naturally took the news with doubt as well as admiration. Here was a venture that spoke of courage and imagination, of a special breed of faith, of idealism. But it also demanded more than ordinary determination, perseverance and powers of organisation. It would by no means make Sri Sankar Sengupta rich even if he ran it for a hundred years. If anything a very few years would probably eat his entire money away. A Bengali felt happy that it was another Bengali who had taken the plunge, but would it be merely a house journal for the Bengali speaking peoples ; or would it really be able to establish its claim as India's only monthly journal on folk culture ? Would its contributors be drawn from far and near and would the journal itself achieve the right degree of quality and rectitude ? These were among the questions that one asked oneself as one waited while the journal started its career in January, 1960.

Anyone with any experience of running any kind of journal is constantly stalked by the nightmare of looking for enough printable material to fill forty pages every month. This comes over and above the other mansize worries of raising the subscriptions, winning the advertisements, finding the right printer, securing a quota of paper, getting together a band of dedicated editorial assistants. Each task is made difficult many times over specially when a journal limits itself entirely to such an esoteric subject as folklore. For folklore must be one of the queerest bees in the bonnet even among avowedly esoteric pursuits. It is no easy job in such a field to get the writer to face

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\* Sankar Sengupta published 'Indian Folklore' in 1956. Only two volumes were brought out that year. In 1957 also the frequency of the journal was half-yearly. The journal was converted to a quarterly in 1958 and from January 1960 the name of the journal has been shortened to 'Folklore'. This decision was taken in October, 1959, as referred to above by Sri Mitra.—S. S.



his reader regularly without fail once every month, keep them together and what is more to get their ranks to grow.

All this Sri Sankar Sengupta has been able to achieve and more in five long but rewarding years. If one glances through the contents of the twelve issues of 1964, one finds as many as 46 contributors of whom only 17 have Bengali names. As many as 6 have non-Indian names and written on non-Indian folklore or scholarship. The journal reviewed 23 books in a variety of languages and published 11 reports of field-work, that were in addition to the main articles by fortysix contributors. Over and above there were thirteen general articles including editorials.

I therefore felt greatly honoured when Sri Sankar Sengupta asked me to write the introduction to the first volume of *The Folklorists of Bengal*. The author tells us in his preface how 'it was once decided to abandon the idea of publishing this volume altogether.' Indeed, the printer's work in the proofs that Sri Sengupta sent me to base this little introduction on left so much to be desired that I too thought that the book might do well to wait. But despite its blemishes, among which one notices mutilations and misprints even in the quotations, I felt that this book should go forth, not only to retrieve the money that had already been spent over it, which Sri Sengupta can ill afford to lose, but to offer much valuable biographical and bibliographical material in one place, to strengthen our sense of history and our sense of debt to none of whom folklore was a wholetime job and yet each of whom gave us so much.

It has hardly been possible to distinguish folklore from mythology. Sri Sengupta moreover brings together scholars who worked in diverse branches of mythology and folklore, even those who worked strictly no more than on the border regions of either. The greatest of our mediaeval poets, Kabikankan Mukundaram, wove his epic more around folklore than mythology and creative authors—

writers of fiction as well as poets—have done the same, much as great musicians have raised their *ragas* and *raginis* on folk tunes or melodies. But the modern, scholarly, interest in folklore came with such persons as Henry Taylor Colebrooke, William Jones and Francis Buchanan Hamilton at the end of the eighteenth century. Even before Sir Richard Francis Burton strode the world of folklore like a colossus several curious and important books had appeared and made their mark. One thinks of Thomas Bacon's *The Orientalist* published in 1842, which brought together in one volume a series of folk tales, legends and historical romances. But the great rush of interest came with H. H. Wilson's *The Religious Festivals of the Hindus* published in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society in 1848. A great many European scholars and administrators applied themselves to the task of collection and translation thereafter, notably persons like Kelly, Hunter, Dalton, Rice. Three great names focussed much attention on this field in the third quarter of the last century: Richard Francis Burton, James Fergusson and Richard Temple. They were quickly followed by a galaxy of brilliant scholars chief of whom were Sherring, Denzil Ibbetson, Herbert Risley, Thurston and Crooke. The church missions also did great work during this time, the last quarter of the nineteenth century, in building up not only grammars and lexicons but compilations of folktales, legends and proverbs. Interest was widespread and even minor authors made their mark, e.g., Joseph Jacobs and his *Indian Fairy Tales* in 1892, Frederick Fawcett and his *Festivals to village Goddesses*. European interest continued in the work of such great names as Tauney, Richard Carnac Temple, Donald Mackenzie, Halliday and Crooke and it is often forgotten that one of the most powerful moving spirits in the field of folklore research was that of no less a person than Margaret Elizabeth Noble herself, Sister Nivedita as she came to be called. Her *Cradle Tales of Hinduism* published in 1907, but in preparation for several years before, powerfully stirred two great minds: Rabindra-

nath Tagore and Abanindranath Tagore. What is more, she more than anybody else, more than the great scholars themselves, infected the Bengali and eventually the Indian creative mind, with an urge for research in this direction.

It is perhaps no mere coincidence that Sri Sankar Sengupta has selected names that represent the several streams of interest in the nineteenth century. Lal Behari Day, his first subject, stands for me at any rate for the New learning, the inquiring mind of the church missions, the rectitude of faithful studies *in situ* mixed with the desire for change. Rabindranath Tagore is of course the creative mind *par excellence*, turning to the sources of rhythm image and symbol. Saratchandra Mitra is the solid scholar and anthropologist in the European manner, while Dineshchandra Sen and Dakshinarajan Mitra-Majumdar must have taken it upon themselves to improve upon what the scholar administrator had to offer during their time. They made up with their own labours and travels what the scholar-administrators achieved with their wide network of reporting sources. Gurusaday Dutt was a class by himself who reacted against and was at the same time stimulated by the environment of his work. His work promised either of two courses: coming nearer to his people or going farther away from them. He chose the former with a passion that moved mountains. Kṛdarnath Majumdar and Chandra-kumar De are symbols of intense local research to whom the encyclopaedist was already a phenomenon of the past.

One of the tasks that the 1961 Census of India set itself was the completion of more than 500 village surveys throughout the length and breadth of the land. These village surveys have each a separate chapter on folk tales, proverbs, myths, rhymes, legends, riddles, erotic lore, songs and dances, and anecdotes apart from separate chapters on rites and rituals, ceremonies, beliefs, customs, festivals, gods and goddesses, dress, ornaments, utensils, arts and crafts. In designing the outline and instructions for the survey in 1959, I was much too conscious of the debt under which my

forebears had put me. One realized that all that one could hope to achieve was to extend the bounds of knowledge in these fields by only a few steps. Among one's forebears one would gratefully count the great names that Sri Sengupta has invoked and I would therefore like to complement him on the task he has performed in the face of many obvious difficulties.

New Delhi  
10 February 1965

ASOK MITRA



*Folklorists of Bengal*



**Born 1824**

**Lal Behari Day**

**Died 1894**



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## LAL BEHARI DAY (1824-1894)

**I**N Mid-Nineteenth century English Education had its footing in Bengal and began to spread apace. While English rulers found English medium expedient for administration, Christian missionaries under their patronage went on establishing Anglo-Bengali free schools, one after another, where Christian ways and Christianity could be taught with advantage and with eventual conversion of natives into Christianity. These missionaries had another advantage. Western philosophy and literature held the sway over all intellectually alert men of those days and a revolutionary change was looming large. The superstitious rituals and belief of the Hindus were laid bare in the new light of Christianity. Christianity became the criterion to judge the ways of life. A large section of intelligentsia who smarted under obscurantism turned to be proselytes. Traditional moorings were destroyed and the former attitude of acceptance could no longer serve as the basis of Bengal's social life. Old conservative social order gave way to the liberal social standards of Christianity. A movement was started for reshuffling old order of things in the light of revitalising ideas of Christianity. Hinduism was sought to be coddled by the advocates of Brahmoism in the monotheistic doctrine, "Ekomebadwitiyam" (meaning, there is none but one Supreme Being), of Vedantic philosophy. Hinduism had to shake off a good many of its old features. Secular education ran high and new avenues of occupation were opened up. The members of the younger generation were on the march and refused to recognise all the sanctions and privileges of the past. After many years of stagnation, dynamic western ideas had become their passion.



## Childhood

In this transitional period Lal Behari was born on 18th December, 1824. In the same year another great man of letters, Michael Madhusudan Datta, was born and, curiously enough, in later years both of them embraced Christianity in the hope that under the aegis of Christianity their aspirations will be realised.

A controversy exists over the location of birth place of Lal Behari Day. G. Macpherson wrote the biography of Lal Behari<sup>1</sup> who observed, "Away to the North of Calcutta, some sixty or seventy miles distant, there stands in the flat fertile district of Burdwan the quiet, pleasant rural village of *Talpur* (Palm town).....Here in the year 1824 Lal Behari Day was born". But later investigation reveals that there is no existence of a village of such a name, which is rather a fanciful invention of Lal Behari himself. In fact, Lal Behari was born in the village of Sonapalasi in the district of Burdwan. As Lal was very black in complexion, his father christened him "Kala (black) Gopal" and "Lal Behari" was his adopted name. His family belongs to the caste of "Subarna Banik" (Banker's caste). Their family title was 'Day' and the Nawab awarded the title "Mandal". They were puritan Vaishnab.

Lal took his primary education in his village school. His elementary education having been completed, his father got him admitted in the missionary school of Rev. Duff who had then a name for missionary and educational spirit.

At the age of nineteen he was converted to Christianity. After his conversion he went one day to his native village. It was no wonder that he had a cold and sullen reception from his kith and kin in the village. He described his bitter experience,—'I stopped before the threshold of my village home which appeared to me like the well-known face of an old chum, when I was received with showers of tears and whiff of wail'. No doubt, this may be the common experience of converts living in his parent society. It is most likely that he took this disaffection of his own people so much at heart

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1. *Life of Lal Behari Day* by G. Macpherson, M. A. with an introduction by Thomas Smith, Published by T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1906.

that by coining false name of his birth place he wanted to banish himself from its association. Hence in giving an account of himself, he gave his birth place an imaginary name of Talpur instead of Sonapalasi<sup>2</sup>.

We learn from his "*Recollections of My School Days*" that his father hailed from Dacca, which was his ancestral home. He had entered into matrimony there and had two sons. But this married life was brief and ended with the death of his wife and two children. Then he migrated to West Bengal and 'again entered the bonds of wedlock. His second wife bore him two sons'. Of these two, Lal Behari was the elder one. The name of his next son was Banamali. When Lal's father, Radhakanta was forty years old he married Bhagabati Dasi, a girl of fourteen years of age in the second time. Lal Behari wrote, "As my father looked upon the education of a child as a most momentous affair, he resolved that I should not begin to learn the Bengali alphabet without the celebration of a religious ceremony, and a solemn invocation especially of the goddess of wisdom, without whose blessing he believed no man can acquire knowledge. The astrologers were consulted, and an auspicious day fixed upon. On that day a solemn service was held, at which the family priest officiated. At this distance of time I do not remember the details of the ceremony ; but this much I recollect, that I put on new clothes, that I had to repeat some words, that I had to bow down several times with my head to the ground, that the family priest received gifts in money and clothes, that presents were sent to the school-master of the village who was to initiate me into the mysteries of reading and writing, and that a piece of ochre (the equivalent

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2. The specimen of his correspondence with one of his successor, (nephew) the late Jogendranath Mondal and two letters identified to be the letters of his daughter obtained through the courtesy of Sri Sannyasidas Dutta of the village of Balganna and preserved in the Lal Behari Smriti Samitee (Palasi) prove beyond doubt that Lal Behari was born in Palasi (Sonapalasi) in 1824 and not in Talpur. Besides, in her 'Reminiscences' Bachubai wrote "Our little boy Sorab, was six months old when he was carried off by Cholera of the worst type, in fifteen hours, in the beginning of July 1867. Lal was away from home, he had gone to realize his belongings at PALASI just after his brother died suddenly.....I forgot to mention that early in 1862—I visited my husband's birth place PALASI, for some days." —Reminiscences of Mrs. B. Day. Baptist Mission Press.

for chalk in the villages of Bengal) was put into my hand. I was thus solemnly and religiously commended to the especial favour of the goddess of learning and wisdom”.

“In this age of rampant unbelief, all this may be deemed a silly superstition. But silly it certainly is not ; and if it is somewhat superstitious, it is only an excess of an essentially good feeling. It cannot be denied that the most important epoch in the history of a child is the period when he is sent to school ; and it is doubtless attended with the most beneficial effects both on the child and on his parents, if that period is entered upon with a sense of the importance of the occasion, and with an invocation of the divine blessing”.

“The following morning I accompanied my father, went to the village school, and was introduced to the schoolmaster, to whom I made a profound bow—my head touching the ground in the act. The schoolmaster with the ochre which I had in my possession, traced the first letters of the Bengali alphabet ( অ, আ, ক, খ ) on the ground ; and I was told to run the ochre over every one of those letters”<sup>3</sup>.

Alexander Duff, the first missionary sent out by the Church of Scotland, founded in Calcutta in 1830 the General Assembly’s institution<sup>4</sup> in the face of tremendous opposition from the Orientalist party who regarded Sanskrit as the destined regenerator of India. Gopinath Nandy who suffered grievously at the hands of the British soldiers during the War of Independence in 1857 was the first Bengalee baptised and then Krishna Mohan Banerjee. Krishna Mohan after his conversion, joined the Church of England. When Rev Duff left Calcutta for “home” Mackay and Ewart took over the charge of the General Assembly’s Institution from Dr. Duff.

#### Education

Lal Behari was admitted into his village school when he was four years of age. His progress in this school was not a marked one. As English education was then held to

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3. “Recollections of my school days” by An Old Bengali Boy, Bengal Magazine.

4. Now known as Scottish Church College, Calcutta.

be immensely prospective, his father decided to get him admitted into a Missionary school where English was taught by the English clergy. This foreign education was not taken with a good grace by the common people. Lal Behari's mother was ill disposed to send him to a Missionary school and she said, "I do not want my son to be either learned or rich"<sup>5</sup>. Then again, well-wishers and friends warned his father to keep Kala Gopal (Lal Behari's Hindu name) away from Christian missionaries and gave this verdict that those missionaries would insinuate Christianity into his tender mind and would not rest until he was made a confirmed Christian. But his father did not budge from his determination and said, "If it is written on Kala Gopal's forehead that he will *not* become a Christian, then he will not become a Christian, let Duff Saheb do what he can ; but if it is written on Kala Gopal's forehead that he *will* become a Christian, then he will become a Christian, do what I can"<sup>6</sup>. Nothing could stop his father. After all, Lal Behari was admitted into General Assembly's Institution in 1833. But his father did not live to see him grow up into manhood. He died in 1837.

Lal Behari had a keen interest in study. In the year of the death of his father he could not prepare his lesson well and lost his first position among successful students at the annual examination. He felt crestfallen and this shortcoming was more telling than his bereavement upon his mental balance. With his father's death his struggle for existence began. How to meet the expenses of his education presented him a problem. Fortunately, for the timely generosity of a cousin, he got a shelter at *Chor Bagan*, a parish of central Calcutta where he resided for six years till he became a Christian. His success during the period he was in the General Assembly Institution stimulated him for further effort. He was the only student of the Free Church Institution who won three gold medals in three consecutive years. In this connection let us remember that, Lal cherished a desire for having his course of study in Hindu School. After much deliberation Lal Behari, then a boy of fourteen, went straight to David Hare, the then Principal of

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5. "Recollections of my school days".

6. Ibid.

Hindu School, to whom he expressed his desire. David Hare's motto was humanism and not conversion. Considering that the boys of General Assembly are all trained in Christian ways and that Lal Behari's association with Hindu boys of his school might have a baneful effect on them, he was not disposed to take him in. In this connection the following quotation is to be noted :

Lal Behari Day....'I wish, sir, to be admitted into your school.'

Mr. Hare.—'What school do you attend ?'

L. B. D.—'I am reading now in the General Assembly's Institution.

Mr. H.—'What books do you read ?'

L. B. D.—'I read Marshman's *Brief Survey of History*, Lennie's *Grammar*, Geography, Euclid [Book Second], New Testament, and Bengali.'

Mr. H.—'Do you know the 7th Proposition of the First Book of Euclid ? Let me see you demonstrate it. Go to the board.'

The lad went to the blackboard accordingly, enunciated the proposition, and proceeded with its demonstration, which he completed to Mr. Hare's entire satisfaction. Then Mr. Hare resumed the conversation.

Mr. H.—'You seem to be well taught; why do you wish to leave the General Assembly's Institution ?'

L. B. D.—'People say, there is better teaching in your school ; besides, I have a great desire to go to the Hindu College from your school.'

Mr. H.—'There must be very good teaching in the General Assembly's Institution ; Dr. Duff has sent out a new missionary, Mr. Campbell.

L. B. D.—'There is no one in the name of Cambell in the General Assembly's Institution ; but perhaps you mean Mr. Mac Donald ?'

Mr. H.—'Yes, yes, Mr. MacDonald, they all say, he is a clever man. You had better remain where you are.'

L. B. D.—'No, sir kindly admit me into your school.

Mr. H.—'You read the New Testament ; you are half a Christian. You will spoil my boys.'

L. B. D.—‘I read the New Testament because it is a class-book but I don’t believe in it. I am no more a Christian than this boy here.’

Mr. H.—‘All Mr. Duff’s pupils are half-Christians. I won’t take any of them into my school. I won’t take you; you are half-Christian; you will spo. my boys’<sup>7</sup>.

Lal Behari had a facile pen. He had stated in an article entitled “Battle between Orientalists and Anglicists” that “in 1823 the Committee of Public Instruction was organised by Mr. Adam, who stated its object to be the ‘considering, and from time to time submitting to Government, the suggestion of such measures as it may appear expedient to adopt with a view to the better instruction of the people, to the introduction of useful knowledge, including the sciences and arts of Europe, and to the improvement of their moral character.’ The committee were at first not overburdened with work, as they had only two colleges under their supervision—the Madrussa College of Calcutta and the Sanskrit College of Benaras. In the following year, however, the Sanskrit College of Calcutta was opened ; in 1825 was established the Delhi College for giving instruction in Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit; and the Hindu College of Calcutta, though originally a private institution, was admitted into the pale of the committees’ patronage. Though English classes were opened in some of the colleges, the labours of the committee were directed chiefly to the promotion of Oriental learning. As the people were averse to learning Arabic and Sanskrit, pupils were bribed into those studies by stipends tenable for twelve or fifteen years. Large sums were spent in the reprinting of Sanskrit and Arabic works, containing for the most part an unhealthy literature, questionable ethics, and false science ; and equally large sums were spent in translating European works on science into Arabic. While the Government was thus engaged in encouraging the teaching of false history, false astronomy, false medicine, the instincts of the people themselves were leading them in a different direction. The Hindu College, the Oriental Seminary, the General Assembly’s Institution, and other English schools of the metropolis, were creating a thirst for English knowledge. While Arabic and

Sanskrit students had to be bribed into learning those languages, the doors of the English schools were crowded with boys begging for admission; while Arabic and Sanskrit books had scarcely a single purchaser, the School Books Society sold seven or eight thousand volumes every year, and not only paid the expenses of printing, but realised a profit of 20 per cent on the outlay<sup>8</sup>.

In this crowd of youthful aspirants Lal went to David Hare. But he was refused admission. So he had to stay on in General Assembly's Institution. It may be remembered here that Dr. Duff left India for Scotland to recover his health in 1834 and returned in 1840. During these years Lal Behari knew Dr. Duff only by report.

#### Career

Lal Behari had got all the teachings of the Bible and in July 1843 he was baptised by Dr. Duff when he was a student in the 4th. year class. He practised Christianity to the last day of his life with the courage of his conviction. But he was out and out a Bengalee in his frame of mind and bearings<sup>9</sup>. So Bengal's lore had been his concern. Bengali elements abound in his literary works, namely, "*Folktales of Bengal*," "*Bengal Peasant Life*" "*Bengali Festival and Holidays*," "*Sports and Games of Bengal*" "*Banker Caste*" "*Chaitanya and Vaishnabas of Bengal*." Even the magazine founded and edited by him was styled as "*Bengal Magazine*."

Though he took to Christianity and his surrounding was European, he had no disrespect for Hindu culture and did not alienate his Hindu brothers. For years Lal was a member of the Bethune Society<sup>10</sup>, Calcutta, and almost

8. 'Battle between Orientalists' and Anglicists, *Bengal Magazine*.

9. He went on a tour to different provinces of India and had the experience of the people of respective provinces. In a statement about their relative merits he said—"The Bengalees are far ahead of them in civilization and whatever intellect was required there you are sure to find in a Bengalee" (1859).

10. Bethune Society was established in 1849 by Drinkwater Bethune. The society started a girls' school at first and it was promoted to a girls' college in condition.

annually participated in its deliberation. In his address at Bethune Society, Calcutta, in 1868 he said—"Unless Primary education is made compulsory the lowest classes will remain steeped in ignorance—voluntary education can succeed only among people who are accustomed to freedom—but this would not apply to the Bengalee, in whose national history, liberty is an unknown sound"<sup>11</sup>. Lal Behari tried hard to make Primary education compulsory but he could not succeed. Our National Government, of course, has taken up the plan for free compulsory primary education.

Two years before his conversion ( in 1841 ) there was an essay competition among the boys of General Assembly. For his article "Conversion of St. Paul, viewed as an argument for the Truth of Gospel," he was awarded the first prize. Following year, for his article entitled "Falsity of Hindu Religion", he was rewarded with a cash prize of Rs. 50/-. Gradually he became widely known and came in contact with the leaders of *Brahmo Samaj* and other intellectual leaders of the then Bengal.

In 1846 Lal was appointed as a Catechist in the Church of Rev. Duff from where he went to Kalna (in the district of Burdwan) as a Christian missionary. He learnt Hebrew, Latin and Greek and their religions from the missionary teachers there. Here, in Kalna, he edited "*Arunodaya*" (a Bengali weekly magazine). This magazine had the proud privilege of publishing articles from famous intellectuals of those days but it lasted only for a year. Four months after the Sepoy Mutiny (First Indian War of Independence) he felt like writing in 'Calcutta Review', the 'most distinguished journal of his time, and accordingly he wrote a letter on 26th September, 1857 to Dr. T. Smith, editor and an old Professor of his, requesting him to accommodate his writing in the said journal. Perhaps, his first contribution to "Calcutta Review" was, "Life and Labour of Dr. Carey." In course of time he distinguished himself by writing the articles, namely (1) Bengali games and amusements, (2) Bengali festivals and holidays, (3) Vaisnavism in Bengal, etc. He was by then very conspicuous in the Government circle and was called to

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11. Life of Lal Behari Day by G. Macpherson.



join Education Department by the Director of Public Instruction of Bengal. Describing the circumstances which led to his appointment, Macpherson wrote—"During the great famine in Orissa, the then Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Cecil Beadon, was severely taken to task by a portion of the Press for not having adopted, as was alleged, proper measures to cope with that calamity. The *Friday Review* was one of the newspapers that firmly defended the course pursued by the Lieutenant-Governor. In return for the support thus accorded to him, Sir Cecil Beadon, on retiring from office, recommended its editor Mr. Day to the Director of Public Instruction, who, in consequence of this recommendation, shortly afterwards offered Mr. Day the post of professor of English and Philosophy of Berhampore College. This post, after carefully considering the obligations he owed to his family, he decided to accept, and entered on his new sphere of duty in September, 1867"<sup>12</sup>. Lal Behari entered the service late in life, at about the age of forty three; he had the privilege to get an extension of service for two years, which was further extended for a period of five years by Sir Rivers Thompson.

Since 1867 till 1889 he rendered his continuous service to Education Department. He was a Fellow of the University of Calcutta. He was transferred from Berhampur to Hooghly in 1872 from where he retired.

#### Marriage

He married Miss Bachubai Hormozdji on 26th November 1859,<sup>13</sup> the daughter of Rev. Hormozdji Pestonji of Surat when Lal Behari was thirty five and Bachubai twenty one years old. He had in all 9 issues, (4 sons and 5 daughters) of which 2 sons and 1 daughter died in their infancy. His eldest son was

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12. Ibid.

13. There is also a controversy over the date of marriage of L. B. Day. Macpherson and others opine that it was on 2nd January, 1860, which we too quoted in our article in "Folklore", July, 1962. But Bachubai in her "Reminiscences" said that their marriage date was 26th November, 1859. Usually, women are found very particular about the date of their marriage. So this date may be taken as the correct one.

sent to England for becoming a barrister. But as he did not find any meaning in that career he became a Roman Catholic priest. Since then he could not be traced, which fact was aptly described by Mrs. Bachubai Day in a letter to her friend, Dr. Hastie. The letter runs thus :

“...Being a most affectionate father, he always used to express a desire to the effect that he hoped till his death to have all his three sons and two daughters near him, and he broke down completely owing to our eldest son having disappointed us. We spent over Rs. 12,000 (a sum whose money value was very considerable at that time) to qualify him for the bar and the boy left home with a solemn promise that in the event of his being permitted to return from England (after passing his exams. and keeping his terms) a full-fledged barrister, he would help us in his turn to educate and settle in life his junior brothers and sisters ...

My dear husband broke down rapidly under this, and other disappointments of a pecuniary nature (during past five years) owing to his journalistic and literary undertakings and tendencies. His eyes together with his whole nervous system became thoroughly impaired and shaken” (12th January, 1895) !<sup>14</sup>

#### Editor

Here is a list of magazines that ran under his able editorship—

- (1) Arunodaya, (1855-56).
- (2) India Reformer, (1860-1861).
- (3) Friday Review (1866-1869)
- (4) Bengal Magazine (1873-1881).

In addition to “Calcutta Review” he used to contribute articles on social, moral and political topics to the “Hindu Patriot.” G. Macpherson said, “The year before he took in hand editing of “Bengal Magazine,” he wrote the story *Govinda Samanta*, a work which, if it did not place him in the highest rank, assuredly gave him an honourable position among the writers of fiction in English tongue.....

14. Quoted from the Life of Lal Behari Day by G. Macpherson.

In India it was pronounced a truthful *portraiture* of manners, customs and habits of the people it purported to describe. In England where the author's name was less known than in Bengal, the critics had more to say of his surprising mastery of a language which was not his mother-tongue.

Journalism Mr. Day never took up as a profession, nor is there any ground for supposing that he never thought of doing so. The one object which he kept steadfastly in sight, and which he had as much at heart when his faculties were failing him as when his powers were at their prime, was the improving and purifying of the social, moral and religious life of the people among whom he was born and bred"<sup>15</sup>.

#### Literary Activities

During his tenure as a professor of English in Hooghly College (1872-1889) he edited "Bengal Magazine," where (1) "Recollections of my School Days" and (2) "Recollection of Alexander Duff," which in fact were the autobiography of the writer, all the folktales of Bengal—which later were brought out in a book form and many other unique works were published. His article "The Banker's Caste of Bengal" (*Subarna Vanik Samaj*) gives an elucidation of Hindu caste system then in vogue. In 1871, he wrote his book "Bengal Peasant Life" or *Govinda Samanta*. How this book came to light has been described by Mrs. Bachubai Day. To put it in her words, "Just a few months before leaving Berhampore College, and before his transfer to Hooghly College, my husband took up the writing of the Prize-Novel, which was first named "Govinda Samanta" but later on was given the more popular name of "Bengal Peasant Life" ...Every line and page of that work as well as his subsequent books, such as, "Folktales of Bengal" and "Recollection of Dr. Duff", I was requested to look into and to correct or point out any slip of pen or memory I could find in them"<sup>16</sup>. In 1881 "Folktales of Bengal" was published by Messrs Macmillan & Co., London. It was originated at the

15. Ibid.

16. *Reminiscences of Mrs. B. Day*, Baptist Misson Press, Calcutta.

request of Captain Temple, a son of Richard Temple. He took great interest in folklore of various nations and "wanted to note in them the affinity of races, in aid of scientific researches, as then tales of all nations bore a slight similarity to each other, with variations<sup>17</sup>".

Wherefrom Lal got the inspiration of writing 'Bengal Peasant life' has been narrated by himself in the preface of the book.

"Early in the year 1871 Baboo Jaykissen Mookerjee, of Uttarpara, a zamindar in Bengal, offered a prize of £ 50 for the best novel illustrating on 'the social and domestic life of rural population and working classes of Bengal.' The essays were sent to the adjudications early in 1872, but, owing to the absence of two adjudicators in England, and to other causes, the award was not made till 1874. This book was dedicated to Babu Joykissen Mookerjee, one of the most enlightened zamindar in Bengal and the donor of the prize. This little book was in opinion of the Press inscribed with sentiments of esteem and regard by the author"<sup>18</sup>. This wonderful book was highly "acclaimed by the World Press"<sup>19</sup>. Macpherson said again we refer to his warm and undeviating sympathy with the toiling peasantry of his country. The remarks with which he begins his account of their simple rural sports might have been penned as an introduction to his *Govinda Samanta*, composed some twenty years later. "The rayats of

17. Ibid.

18. Life of Lal Behari Day, G. Macpherson.

19. "Besides writing a novel of a perfectly original character, one which even the most blase frequenter of the circulating library must acknowledge to be out of common, he was contrived to give us an immense amount of information concerning the peasantry of India."

Morning Post (London)

"Govinda Samanta is full of graphic description, and shows in its author a high degree of power, of careful observation, and of discrimination in the choice of picturesque details".

Englishman (London.)

"The work before us is not only excellently conceived and well written but it deals with topics which, if familiar to Indian administrators are to the English reader as novel as the incidents in 'Uncle Tom's Cabin....The descriptions are full of life and vigour. The diction is entirely free from the rigidity peculiar to 'Young Bengal'. The writer has the command of clear, unaffected English style....."

Saturday Review (London)

(Quoted from an advertisement appeared in "Bengal Magazine". June & July, 1877, Nos. LIX & LX.)

Bengal," he wrote, "are as interesting a class of people as any peasantry in the world. Amongst them is to be found a vast deal of the simplicity of olden times; and some of the social virtues which they exercise entitle them to our respect and admiration. But they have been greatly abused; systematic oppression from time immemorial has paralysed their energies, deprived them of their native manliness, and reduced them to the ignoble condition of slaves. Their own countrymen have proved to be their cruellest oppressors and most inveterate foes. The zamindar's *Katchari* is the scene of the rayats' degradation, where he is derided, spat upon, and treated as if he were the veriest vermin in creation"<sup>20</sup>. No pen has been more effectively wielded than Mr. Day's to remove these blots.

"For the simple, innocent recreations with which rustic toil lightened its hard lot, he had nothing but kindly words; amusements distinctly demoralising in their tendency he could not too severely denounce. The impure state of the Drama in Bengal, for instance, excited his keen disgust, to which he gave expression in the following sketch, where he is almost tempted to take up the satirist's lash :—"Of the execrable representations called *Jatras*, we dare not give here a detailed description; they are wretched from the commencement to the fifth act. The plots are often the amours of Krishna, of the love of *Bidya* and *Sundar*. In the representations of the Krishnajatra, boys, arrayed in the habit of *Sakhis* and *Gopinis* (milk-maids), cut the principal figure on the stage. It would require the pencil of a masterpainter to portray the killing beauty of these fairies of the Bengali stage. Their sooty complexion, their coal-black cheeks, their haggard eyes, their long-extended arms, their gaping mouths, and their puerile attire, excite disgust. Their external deformity is rivalled by their discordant voices. For the screechings of the night-owls, the howlings of the jackals and the barkings of dogs that bay the moon are harmony compared with their horrid yells. Their dances are in strict accordance with the other accessories. In the evolutions of the hands and feet, dignified with the name of dancing, they imitate all postures and gestures calculated to soil the mind and pollute the fancy. The principal actors during the

interludes are *mathor*, who enters the stage with a broomstick in his hand, and cracks a few stupid jests, which set the audience in a roar of laughter ; and his brother *Bhulua*, who, completely fuddled, amuses the spectators with false steps of his feet"<sup>21</sup>. We cannot name more person who were more loyal to the country or more acutely sensitive regarding the reputation of its people than Mr. Day. Let us quote again from Lal Behari Day a little sketch of Indian Peasant's belief in Mother Lakshmi :—

"The paddy harvest-field is, as we have seen, a scene of rural joy, but the sugar-cane house is a scene of still greater joy. It is visited every day by every little boy and girl in the village, each of whom receives one sweet cane as a present from the kind-hearted peasants. Every day loads of sugar-cane are given away to children and Brahmins; but the peasants give them away with cheerful hearts, believing that Mother Lakshmi will bless them the coming year with a more abundant crop; and the name of the niggardly and impious husbandsmen who send away children and Brahmins empty handed from the sugar-cane house, is held in execration by the whole of the village community. Not only is the cane given away, but quantities of the juice while boiling are dealt out to children, who come provided with vessels for the purpose ; and not unfrequently brinjals (egg-fruit) and other vegetables are thrown into the boilers, and then taken out and eaten with infinite relish by the children, multitudes of whom are seen, at all hours of the day, loitering about in the precincts of the sugar-cane house, to the great detriment of the village school, which during those days has a thin attendance"<sup>22</sup>. . . . . "From its warmly espousing the cause of the children of the soil, *Govinda Samanta* has been likened to the story of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and to some slight extent the comparison may hold true. But in many respects the two tales are quite dissimilar, for the tale of Bengal life has one of the thrilling adventures which make the American story exciting reading by its strong appeal to the imagination, and though the rayat was at times oppressed, his legal position was far removed

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21. Bengal Peasant Life, Lal Behari Day.

22. Ibid.

from slavery. Nor was *Govinda Samanta* written for the express object of stirring up sympathy for a down-trodden race"<sup>23</sup>. We have, in the above, quoted from Lal Behari's work only to have an idea of the style of writing of his and also a smack of the ideology that worked in his mind.

Extensive popular demand of this book gave him inspiration to write books on similar topics. The best of the work of Lal Behari Day was "Folktales of Bengal" (1881). It was dedicated to Richard Carnac Temple, Captain, Bengal Staff Corps, F. R. G. S., M. R. A. S., M. A. I., etc., who first suggested to Mr. Day the idea of collection of folktales of Bengal, the mention of which has already been made. In the Preface to this book Lal Behari has written: "I had myself, when a little boy, heard hundreds (stories)—it would be no exaggeration to say thousands—of fairy tales from an old woman, Sambhu's mother (Bengal Peasant Life)—for she was no fictitious person: she actually lived in the flesh and bore that name.....But she had gone long, long ago.....I found a Bengalee Christian woman, who, when a little girl and living in her heathen home, had heard many stories from her old grandmother. She was a good story-teller, but her stock was not large; and after I had heard ten from her I had to look about fresh sources. An old Brahman told me two stories, an old barber, three; an old servant of mine two; and the rest I had from another old Brahman. None of my authorities knew English; they all told the stories in Bengali and I translated them into English when I came home"<sup>24</sup>.

Lal Behari had a chequered life, which was as interesting and romantic as a fiction. Macpherson has said again—"On his retirement his eyesight failed him and for some years before he died he was practically blind"<sup>25</sup>. He died on 28th October, 1894 of hemiplegia or paralysis of the half body, attended by a coma.

Lal Behari was a symbol of a grand success scored by Christian missionaries in Bengal. But today he is going as fast out of picture as he came into it at the peak days of

23. Life of Lal Behari Day, G. Macpherson.

24. Preface of "Folktales of Bengal". L. B. Day

25. Life of Lal Behari Day, G. Macpherson.

British influence. In memory of the Rev. Lal Behari Day we find the following inscription :—

In the memory of  
THE REV. LAL BEHARI DAY

A student of the General Assembly's Institution under Dr. Duff, 1834-1844 ; Missionary and Minister of the Free Church of Scotland, 1855-1867 ; Professor of English in the Government Colleges at Berhampore and Hooghly, 1867-1889 ; Fellow of the University of Calcutta from 1877 ; and well known as journalist and as author of "*Bengal Peasant Life*" and other works.

Born at Talpur (correct place Sonapalasi), Burdwan, 18th December 1824, died at Calcutta 28th October, 1894.

Some of his surviving pupils and of his numerous admirers have erected this tablet.

## Bibliographical Notes

### English Works

1874 "*Bengal Peasant Life*" ; Macmillan, London.

The first edition of this book was published under the title 'Govinda Samanta or the History of Bengali Raiyat' printed in 2 volumes, new edition—'*Bengal Peasant Life*'—1878, reprinted several times.

A passing reference on this book may be made. A wealthy and enlightened Zaminder of Bengal, Babu Joy Kissen Mukherjea had offered a prize for the best novel in Bengali or in English, illustrating the "Social and domestic life of rural population and working classes in Bengal". In response to this invitation 'Govinda Samanta' was composed in 1871 and its writer won the Prize in 1874 and in this year the book was brought out.

1876 *The desirableness and practicability of organising national church in Bengal*, Light Press.

„ *Life and labours of the Rev. Dr. J. Wilson of Bombay*  
(first appeared in '*Bengal Magazine*' and then as a booklet)



- 1878 *An introduction to Brahminism* (collection of four lectures), G. C. Hay & Company.
- 1880 A cheap edition of '*Govinda Samanta*' was published by Macmillan.
- 1881 *Folktales of Bengal*, Macmillan, London. Reprinted several times.
- In compiling his selections of folk-tales the consideration that mainly guided him in his choice was its value of comparative mythology. He explained in the preface of "*Folktales of Bengal*" that "I make the peasant boy Govinda spend some hours every evening in listening to the story told by an old woman, who was called Sambhu's mother, and who was the best story teller in the village. On reading that passage, Captain Temple wrote to me to say how interesting it would be to get a collection of the unwritten stories which old woman recite to children in the evenings, and to ask whether I could not make a collection." This led him to collect and translate into English a number of tales exemplifying the folklore current among the people of Bengal.
- 1885 *The literary beauties of the Bible* : Light Press (All his twelve lectures on the Bible appeared in a book form under the title "The influence of Bible on nation".
- 1926 *Bengal Folk Stories* (Tales of India series by Macmillan, reprinted several times.
- 1931 A small edition of the book "*Folk tales of Bengal*" appeared, reprinted several times.

### Bengali Works

- (1) "Govinda Samanta ba Bangali Krishak Jivan" (a translation of Bengal Peasant Life).
- (2) "Bangla desher Rupkatha" (a translation of Folk tales of Bengal)

### Other Works

Besides his own magazine Lal Behari used to write articles in different magazines and delivered lectures in different organizations. His first article appeared in "Calcutta Review" is "Life and labour of Dr. Carey". Before he sent this manuscript to the editor who was his Professor he wrote, "I have been thinking a long time of writing for 'Calcutta Review' but am utterly at a loss for a subject. Some subjects do indeed suggest themselves to my mind but I know not whether you would like them. I have a paper nearly ready on 'Life and labour of Dr. Carey'."

While in Kalna he undertook the editorship of "Arunodaya" at the suggestion and by the advice of Missionary Fathers.

He readily acceded to the proposal of Babu Srinath Day of Serampore to undertake the editing of "India Reformer".

He took up the editorial duties of "Friday Review" with which he was connected for sometime. But his editorship on "Friday Review" indirectly led to a great improvement in his pecuniary position by opening a way for him to enter Government service.

In the summer of 1872 he planned and brought out "Bengal Magazine" when he was transferred to Hooghly College from Berhampore. As editor of this periodical his name and literary reputation became widely spread. And his greatest literary activity was during the early seventies when in addition to preparing class lectures, he wrote books and edited magazines.

He contributed in "Hindu Patriot" on social, moral and political topics.

We mention below some of his selected essays :

When Lal was a student of Free Church Institution he got two prizes in cash (Rs. 25 and Rs. 35) for (i) "MOST ACCURATE KNOWLEDGE OF SCRIPTURE PROOFS FOR DOCTRINE (ii) CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL VIEWED AS AN ARGUMENT FOR THE TRUTH OF GOSPEL" in 1841.

He earned Rs. 50 (cash prize) for another article "FALSITY OF HINDU RELIGION" in 1842. In 1874 he earned of about Rs. 655 (£ 50) for his Prize Novel "Govinda Samanta".

His strong argument in "SEARCHINGS OF HEART" (a lecture delivered at Calcutta in monthly Missionary prayer meeting) came as a shock and surprise to his audience.

"THE BRAHMA THEORY OF ATONEMENT" and "The desirableness and practicability of organizing a National Church in Bengal" won the attention of the then intellectuals.

Also the following articles of his are noteworthy :

**LIFE AND LABOUR OF DR. CAREY ; Calcutta Review.**

**BENGALI GAMES AND AMUSEMENTS ; Calcutta Review.**

**BENGALI FESTIVALS AND HOLIDAYS ; Calcutta Review.**

**CHAITANYA AND VAISNAVA OF BENGAL ; Calcutta Review.**

**ON TEACHING OF ENGLISH LITERATURE IN COLLEGES OF BENGAL ; Bengal Magazine.**

**RECOLLECTIONS OF MY SCHOOL DAYS ;** (autobiography) Bengal Magazine.

**THE FOLK TALES OF BENGAL ;** (Bengal Magazine) All the tales of his book entitled **FOLK-TALES OF BENGAL** appeared.

**HINDU FAMILY ;** Bengal Magazine.

**LIFE'S SECRET ;** Bengal Magazine.

**RECOLLECTION OF ALEXANDER DUFF ;** Bengal Magazine.

**BATTLE BETWEEN ORIENTALISTS AND ALL ANGLICISTS ;** Bengal Magazine.

**THE REV. JOHN WILLSON ;** Bengal Magazine.

**THE BANKER CASTE ;** Bengal Magazine.

**HARMONY OF SCRIPTURE WITH SCIENCE** (a lecture delivered to educated Hindus) ; Bengal Magazine.

**THE DUTY OF THE EDUCATED NATIVES OF INDIA TO PROMOTE THE MATERIAL PROSPERITY OF THEIR COUNTRY ;** Bengal Magazine.

Lal Behari used the following pen names :

(i) an old Bengali boy, (ii) Mother Goose, (iii) The editor.

G. Macpherson said, "unaided by any accident of birth or wealth, he earned for himself a high standing among all classes, being held in honourable esteem alike by Europeans and Natives of India. But for his own efforts and firm tenacity of purpose, he might, like multitudes of others born under similar conditions, have passed his days in obscurity without even being heard of beyond the narrow precincts of his native villages".



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## RABINDRANATH TAGORE (1861—1941)

**B**EFORE we go to discuss Tagore's role in Bengal's folklore movement let us reconstruct the backdrop against which his activities may be evaluated properly.

A great revival of conscience had inspired India before Tagore. But this revival was predominantly intellectual. The Calcutta Madrasa was founded in 1781, Calcutta branch of the Royal Asiatic Society in 1784, Sanskrit College in Banaras in 1792 which was followed by Sanskrit College, Calcutta in 1793, the Baptist Missionary William Carey came to Calcutta in 1794. In 1799 there was the Chuar rebellion in Bengal followed by the Santhal rising of 1801. The Fort William College was formed in 1800 just 60 years before the birth of Rabindranath. This college did an immense service to the advancement of Bengali prose. Rammohan Roy came to Calcutta in 1815 and started a revival movement of Hinduism on an intellectual level. Hindu College was founded in 1817. The Brahmo Samaj, the Hindu Theistic Church, was inaugurated in 1828. Rammohan died in England in 1833. *Tattvabodhini Sabha* was established by the Maharshi in 1839. Five years later *Tattvabodhini Patrika* appeared under the editorship of Aukshoykumar Dutta in 1843. The First Indian War of Independence (some say, Sepoy Mutiny) was started in 1857. Prior to this great uprising, there were the Ho and Bhumij movements in 1820-21 and in 1832. The Santhal rebellion started again in 1855. This is the time when Eshwarchandra Vidyasagar pleaded for remarriage of the Hindu widows (1857), and Michael Madhusudan Dutta, Keshab Chandra Sen, Rajnarayan Basu, Bhudeb Mukhopadhyaya and other illustrious

*Folklorists of Bengal*



Born 1861

Rabindranath Tagore

Died



sons of Bengal made their debut. The Maharshi started 'National Paper' in 1865. Nabagopal Mitra founded 'Hindu Mela' in 1867. Rabindranath recited one of his first poems at a meeting of this Mela in 1875, when he was a boy of fifteen. A Sadharan Rangalaya\* (a public stage for drama performances) was established in 1872 in Calcutta. The study of Indology and Folklore began in right earnest since the foundation of the Asiatic Society of Calcutta and Bombay. The Indian Congress was established in 1885, and The British Indian Association was founded in 1875. The latter tried to preserve the rights of the feudal nobility who were in the good books of the British for their devoted service. But historically this Association was the first fighter for democratic freedom in India, as has been proved in their battle against Lord Lytton's Law of 1878. The country saw disaffection to British rule following a great famine in 1877, abolition of all import taxes and various other important events. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan's revival movement of Islam during the early part of the latter half of the nineteenth century was initiated on an intellectual level. To quote : "intellectual climate that prevailed in India—most sharply contrasted to that which gave rise to the first understanding of traditional values in Europe : the romantic period. In those days of the brothers Schlegel, Rueckert, the old Goethe and later Max Muller, there was a growing passion for non-European values, hidden in the so far neglected literature outside the classical world."<sup>1</sup> In 1860 Indigo-disturbances cropped up. And the next year to indigo disturbances Tagore was born (6th May, 1861).\*\*

#### Childhood

Tagore was the youngest of the fourteen children of Maharshi Debendranath and Sarada Devi. When a child of six he was admitted to a school but he disliked the way in which education was imparted and left it. He started composing poems at the

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\*This was known as "Bengal Theatre".

1. The Poet of the anti-aesthetic century by U. R. Ehrenfels, Indo-Asian Culture, Vol. X, No. 7, July, 1961.

\*\*Bichitra, Centenary-year Publication.



age of seven and wrote his maiden drama when he was eleven. He sailed for England when he was seventeen. His first journey to England included, he went on a tour of the world not less than thirteen times till he reached the age of seventy-three.

Tagore was held in great veneration by Mahatma Gandhi, Sri Arovindo, Gokhale, Tilak, Annie Besant and he brushed shoulders with Nobel laureates like Albert Einstein, George Bernard Shaw, Romain Rolland, William Butler Yeats (it is Rothenstein who inspired and encouraged Tagore and which was followed by Yeats to render into English his poems and to send it to the Nobel Prize Committee. Tagore translated his poems as "Gitanjali" and he was the first Asian who was awarded Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913. Yeats wrote in 1912—"These prose translations from Rabindranath Tagore have stirred my blood as nothing has for years")<sup>2</sup> and felt at home in the company of Ezra Pound, H. G. Wells, Gilbert Murray and many others.

In his childhood he was pent up within the compound of his house and kept under strict vigilance of the suite of servants. He was denied the liberty to move out of the house at his will. As was customary for boys of high family, he was sent to England for education and was admitted to Brighton School. He studied English literature under Professor Henry Morley at the University College of London. There even he could not make his mind easy with study but picked up acquaintance with his western friends.

"But what is the real reason of Tagore's inner cleavage which later increases still further? For the Poet's own 'explanation' of his inner contradiction as the conflict of European activity with Indian passivity it may sound poetical but can hardly contain the full truth and can hardly be sufficient for understanding of whole phenomenon...

"In the period of "Manasi" two of Tagore's shortcomings play an important role: a still insufficient knowledge of life and its most typical facts, and the want of real and solid ideology."<sup>3</sup> Even in the theoretical works of Tagore a critical reader may find some contradiction but this epoch do not fall within

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2. Preface to English 'Gitanjali'.

3. *At-hiv Orientalni, Praha*, No. 3, 1958.

the scope of the present essay. We will deal here with the positive approach of Tagore to folklore from his prose, poetry and other creations.

### Activities

The problem of rural development in India has been forcefully focussed upon the public mind by Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi by their works and activities. Tagore said : "Today for various reasons, villages are fatally neglected. They are fast degenerating into serfdom, compelled to offer to the ungrateful town cheerless and unintelligent labours for work carried on in an unhealthy and impoverished environment."<sup>4</sup> And Gandhiji declared : "We may not be deceived by the wealth to be seen in the cities in India. It does not come from England or America. It comes from the blood of the poorest. There are said to be seven lakhs of villages in India. Some of them have simply been wiped out. No one has any record of those thousands who have died of starvation and disease in Bengal, Karnatak and elsewhere. The Government registers can give no idea of what village folk are going through."<sup>5</sup>

Tagore had placed the problems of villages and villagers directly. In 1907 as the President of the Pabna Congress he declared : "On mere call 'Brothers' in the time of need we cannot expect an answer from those whose welfare we have never thought of or striven for, whom we have never bound to us as our own people and whom we have ignored again and again and treated without respect."<sup>6</sup> So he painfully said : "if we respect a man we shall never have recourse to setting his home on fire and to gangsterlike violence ; then we shall know how to exert the greatest patience in winning the minds, the hearts and the desires of man for his welfare and his human rights. Then we

4. Rabindranath Tagore on rural reconstruction. Ministry of Community Development and Co-operation, Government of India, 1962.

5. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, June 30, 1944.

6. *Visva-Bharati News* : February, 1962.

shall think only of man and no longer pay any heed to what kind of dress he wears and what kind of salt he eats.”<sup>7</sup> So, Tagore stressed that the Congress must concern itself more with social upliftment which was also the genuine desire of Gandhiji, who took up the cause with all his sincerity and capacity and subsequently became the Father of the Nation.

On 7th Paus of 1308 (Bengali era) Rabindranath with the blessings of the Maharshi, his father, laid the foundation of Santiniketan. In 1922 he established “Visva-Bharati” with a view to making it an ideally perfect specimen of a University—a confluence of Eastern and Western ideals of teaching.

Let us remember here that “The pro-Western, or its antithetical opposite, the pro-Eastern restatements of faith have still persisted in one form or another to the present day. Hinduism has not been shorn of all those elements which impede the progress of life. Caste remains, and so does the subjugation of women. There are other ancient traditions too which, though not directly the outcome of Hindu faith, continue to impede change, and thus become responsible for wasted lives. So the need to break the shackles of the past is as urgent as it was a hundred years ago... Rebellious individualism is in demand, as an instrument suitable for breaking the attachment to the past.

“.....Among some artists and literary men, there is a clearly felt attraction towards the rebellious spirits of the West. Picasso and Gauguin among artists, Elliot, Auden, Spender and James Joyce among poets and writers, or social revolutionaries like Ibsen, Tolstoy or Dostoevsky have been popular ; as also political leaders like Lenin, Trotsky or Stalin.

“There have been others, again, who have tried to reach down to the traditional sources of India’s Brahminical culture, or to the life of the common rural folk, who try to beautify and find a meaning in life by their unaided, spontaneous endeavour, and succeed in creating out of such adventure simple songs and poems, or unsophisticated drawings, and paintings which are of no mean artistic quality.”<sup>8</sup>

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7. *Samuha*.

8. Quoted from ‘East and West in Bengal’ by Nirmal Kumar Bose, *MAN IN INDIA*, Vol. 38. No. 3, 1958.

During this period Tagore got inspiration from his experiences and the idea of village reconstruction, and he went ahead of his times and spoke of the same in a good many articles written and lectures delivered by him at that time. The villagers were under a spell of profound ignorance, stark superstition, pettiness, mean jealousy and rivalry, to which was added their privation. This deplorable and morbid condition of the village-folk—afflicted his touchy mind. Describing the condition of the village and villagers, Tagore wrote his experience which he had in Shilaidah and Potisar : “I endeavoured all the time I was in the country, to get to know it down to the smallest detail. The needs of my work took me on long distances from village to village, from Shilaidah to Potisar, by rivers, large and small, and across *beels* and in this way I saw all sides of village life. I was filled with eagerness to understand the villagers’ daily routine and the varied pageant of their lives. I, the town-bred, had been received into the lap of rural loveliness and I began joyfully to satisfy my curiosity. Gradually sorrow and poverty of the villagers became clear to me, and I began to grow restless to do something about it.”

On the ideals of Sriniketan he said : “It was when I lived at Shilaidah and Potisar that I first saw the life of the villagers. I was then engaged in the management of our ancestral property. The people used to bring before me their joys and their sorrows, their complaints and their clamorous demands. From all this I was able to form a picture of the villages.....

“I am a townsman, city-born ; my ancestors were among the earliest settlers of Calcutta. When I wrote ‘The Swadeshi Samaj’, the idea formulated in my mind—we must endeavour that a power from within the villagers themselves may be working alongside us. What I had to say was that there is no need for us to think in terms of the whole country. I cannot take responsibility for the whole of India. I wish to win only one or two small villages.”<sup>9</sup> Rabindranath tried to draw the attention of the intelligentsia to Bengal’s folklore through his article “Chhelebhulano Chhada” (Nursery rhymes) (1895). We know folklore is a vital part of the whole fabric

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9. Visva-Bharati News, February 1962.

10. Ibid.

of national culture and all-round cultural development cannot be ensured if its folkloristic aspect is left in the lurch. Though opinions differ on the definition of folklore, it had engaged attention of research scholars of the West long before it did so the Eastern scholars.

#### Indian synonyms of Folklore

It is interesting to note in this connection that in the 'Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend' (1949) edited by Maria Leach there are as many as twenty-one definitions of 'Folklore' put forward only by the American Scholars. It may not be out of place to point out that a tendency of the systematic study of folklore has come up in right earnest in India at present and an inclination has been evident to find out an Indian synonym (parallel name) of "Folklore".<sup>11</sup> Some scholars have coined the word "Loka-Vrata" corresponding to "Folklore", some called it "Loka-Vijnan", some gave it the appellation "Loka-Sanskriti", some styled it as "Janapadi-Sahitya"\* or "Jana-Sahitya" while in some cases "Loka-Sruti" or "Loka-Charya" has been the synonyms. S. K. Chatterjee has explained correctly why he prefers "Loka-Yana" as the Indian equivalent to the internationally accepted word "Folklore". Chatterjee's argument is worth noting and that is why we are putting in the foot-note his argument behind his coined word, "*Loka-Yana*",<sup>12</sup> along with some definitions of "Folklore", put forward by the American scholars. But evidently this article has no scope for discussion about the linguistic definition of "Folklore".

11. The word 'folklore' is coined by the English antiquarian William John Thomas in 1846. The word has since been adopted virtually by all continental languages of Europe.

\*The interested readers may also refer to "the Genesis of Janapada" by Krishna Chandra Mishra appeared in the 'Journal of Bihar Research Society', Vol. XLIV. No. 3-4 where a learned study has been made of the word 'Jana' to 'Janapada' being equivalent to "Folklore".

12. 'Loka-Yana' would be a good Indian equivalent, in imitation of "Maha-Yana", "Hina-Yana", "Vajra-Yana", "Deva-Yana" etc., in as much as it means "A way of life" (Yana) among the people (Loka) which is carried down by tradition without any book-learning or sophistication.—S. K. Chatterjee (*Indian Folklore*, 1956).

A Revered Leader

Rabindranath stands out in the ranks of Indian folklorists, although he is not the pioneer in this field of study in Bengal. His erstwhile predecessors were some individuals who did their works by halves, perhaps, owing to their not knowing the scientific technique and were not conscious of its utility. But the name of Lal Behari Day can be singled out for his "Folktales of Bengal" and "Bengal Peasants' Life".

Tagore influenced and encouraged peoples to collect and record fastly dying relics of Bengali tradition and culture and in this regard he was undoubtedly the revered leader.

How Rabindranath gave impetus to the collectors of *Chhadas* and other folkloristic materials have been mirrored in 'Bangiya Sahitya Parishat Patrika'. If we turn over the pages of this organ we can see some collectors who followed the suit of Tagore and came forward with their valuable contribution on folklore, which appeared both in this and in other journals. We quote names of some folklorists here from Parishat Patrika : Basantaranjan Roy (1301), Rajanikanta Gupta (1302), Abdul Karim Sahitya Bisharad (1309, 1312, 1313), Brajasundar Sanyal (1310), Mokshadaranjan Bhattacharyya (1311, 1312), Dakshinaranjan Mitra-Majumdar (1313), Rajendrakumar Majumdar, (1314), Prabhaschandra Bhattacharyya (1315), Haridas Palit (1316), Jibendrakumar Datta (1317), Biswaraj Dhanwantari (1318), Chintaharan Chakravarty (1340, 1341). He also inspired Abanindranath to write 'Banglar Vrata', Upendra Kishore to write 'Toon Toonir Boi', Dinesh Chandra Sen to do his immortal works on folklore and a dozen others.

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(i) Folklore consists of materials that are handed on traditionally from generation to generation without a reliable ascription to an inventor or author.

Archer Taylor (Dictionary of Folklore : Mythology and Legend, 1949)

(ii) Folklore is the science of traditional popular beliefs, tales, superstitions, rimes, all dealing preeminently with the supernatural, and picturization of these beliefs in festive customs, games, mime, song, dance. —Gertrude P. Kurath. Quoted from "Folklore Dictionary".

(iii) Folklore is that part of people's culture which is preserved consciously or unconsciously, in belief and practices, customs and observances of general currency ; in myths, legends, and tales of common acceptance ; and in arts and crafts which express the temper and genius of

## What is Civilization ?

Let us define Bengal's culture by quoting the argument of a social scientist who is of the opinion that ".....If one is permitted to offer a suggestion, it is not the continuity, nor even the fact that the two phases bear the same name, that binds the two phases together. On close examination, we observe how the orthodox leaders of Bengal went back to Sanskrit sources for inspiration. We also observed how, after the contemporary interest in common people's lives, Bengal's artists tried to rediscover things of value in their villages and towns. In each case, certain common elements were discovered. Thus, for instance, there has been a recognition of the pluralistic view of truth as promoted by the Vedanta ; something which allows the Bengali thinker of today to incorporate science and humanism from the West and yet allows him to feel a continuity with his ancient heritage

"In this formidable adventure at cultural reorganization, Bengali culture has always been in process of *becoming*, instead of merely *being*. By contrast with Western items of culture, items of Bengal's culture gained added distinctness. Perhaps, by contrast with Bengal's current life, the life lived by Christian missionaries in India, and of her merchant-princes or rulers, was also changed ; for they too had to live up to a model which was 'truly European or Christian rather than a mere continuation of the kind of life which was lived in Europe

"This tendency to *become* something is the characteristic of any civilization. No civilization perhaps satisfies all the needs of a free and full growth of human life in a perfect manner And when there is a continuity between the *aspirations*

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a group rather than an individual.—Theodor H. Gaster. Quoted from "Folklore Dictionary".

(iv) Folklore is the accumulated knowledge of a homogeneous unsophisticated people, tied together not only by common 'physical bonds but also by emotional ones which color their every expression, giving it unity and individual distinction.

All aspects of folklore, probably originally the product of individuals are taken by the folk and put through a process of re-creation, which through constant variation and repetition become a product.

—M. Leach. Quoted from the "Dictionary of Folklore".

which shape the actuality of cultural life, we are perhaps entitled to regard the two as belonging to one civilization."<sup>13</sup>

For a comprehensive study of any civilization one is thereby to be dependent on folklore study and that is why, Tagore inspired a band of young scholars and workers for a systematic study of Bengal's folklore.

#### Tagore's approach to Folklore

Tagore's approach to folklore is different but more penetrating. Rabindranath evinced his passion for folk traits by incorporating folk-songs, folk-dances and different folk-themes in his pieces of songs, drama, dance-drama and letters. Collection of pieces of folklore and *chhadas* prevalent among the country-people was his another passion. Besides, he had a ready mind to encourage those who took the trouble to go to the remotest places to collect such pieces. He never turned down those young enthusiastic workers who approached him with a request for an introductory note to their book, rather he encouraged them wholeheartedly. The great poet, teacher and philosopher had got a spontaneous reverence from the people of India who regarded him as the *primus inter pares*.

We regard Rabindranath as an outstanding man of rarest gift. Fiction, short-story, art, drama, essay, education, social services—there is no branch of literature and no department of humanitarian work that he left untapped and whatever he touched was turned into gold. Of standard of literature he has set a transcendent scale to attain which is as much difficult for us as reaching the moon.<sup>14</sup>

The purpose of this essay is to make a cursory inspection of some of the facts of his many-sided life to illustrate how greatly his mental being was moulded and inspired by folk-custom, folk-belief, folk-ceremonies, folk-song and *chhadas*. The spirit of folklore is palpably dominant all through his works excepting novels.

We have chosen a few angle which Rabindranath had dwelt at length on the function of folk-culture within the

13. Quoted from MAN IN INDIA. Vol. 38, No. 3, 1958.

14. Sen Gupta Sankar, Loka Sahitya O Rabindranath, 'Kalyani' Vol. III, No. 7. 1959.



framework of national culture. In 1312 B. S. in his address to a gathering of the students he said, "The true spirit of the nation is to be traced to the poetry, song, *chhadās*, *Vrata* tales of the hamlet."<sup>15</sup> It is for us to hunt them up. He observed "some clusters of stray ideas rendered into poems used to have circulation among the common people. Later, a village bard pieced them together to make them into a continuous whole."<sup>16</sup> But the process does not stop there. Folk-literature has dynamic character. It passes from mouth to mouth to take a more reformed or altered from one shape. Even the classic composition may undergo substantial change at the hands of unlettered folk-poet, as has been the case with epic works like the Vedas, The Ramayana, the Mahabharata and classics like the Puranas, Panchatantra, Brihat Katha, Kathasaritsagar, tales of the Jatakas, Mangal Kavyas, the lore of Radha-Krishna etc. So, a British folklorist has correctly said : "Half a dozen men who can neither read nor write can turn the most literary tale into a folklore in a very short time by handing it about between them, so long as they do not refresh their knowledge at its sources."<sup>17</sup> In his learned article "Sahitya Sristi", Rabindranath has said : "Some topics found missing in the original work on Hara-Parvati, Rama-Sita, Radha-Krishna have been foisted in by country-bards and story-tellers and are retold in their lingo to the unsophisticated people. Even court musicians used to smarten up the crude songs with a little elegance and present their recital at the court. The old ideas furbished up, linked together, are cast into a common mould of popular ideology—an ideology that finds a free play in the sentiments of the anonymous masses. The free play of popular sentiment is evident in "Chandi" by Mukundaram, "Dharmamangal" by Ghanaram, "Manasar Bhasan" by Ketakidas, "Annadamangal" by Bharatchandra and so forth. The poetic works are but an honest attempt to interweave undeveloped folk-literature with full-grown classic literature."<sup>18</sup>

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15. Rabindra Rachanabali, Vol. VIII.

16. Ibid.

17. A tentative essay by K. M. Briggs, "Folklore", Vol. 73, Autumn, 1962 (London).

18. Rabindra Rachanabali, Vol. VIII.

In the light of Rabindranath's writings on folklore, we observe that he did not take notice of the impact of historical events, of social change on the evolution of folklore.

Rabindranath had his own way of looking at things. As a creative writer and an artist he was interested in literature and art, so, in his folkloristic works we find some emotion. In this connection we may refer to his article "Sahitya Sristi". We have to pursue his statement "Sajan Nirjaner Nitya Sangame" (living constantly in a state of swinging between association with and seclusion from man) in order to understand that it was the bidding of his heart that urged him to write. Let us bear in mind that the artist use folklore, folk-songs, myths and legends—everything from a brief glance at an old custom or superstition to the evocation of a whole folk epos—not only to give warmth, colour and depth to their narratives, but also to beautify the structure and vivify their themes. This, we can also observe in Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago*.<sup>19</sup>

#### How Tagore was influenced

While dwelling on the subject of scientific study of folklore in Bengal we will recollect an important name. He is Ramendrasundar Trivedi. During the time of Tagore those who had shown much sympathy and respect for the collection, preservation and use of folklore materials in writings and researches, the name of Ramendrasundar and Jogendranath Sarkar should not be forgotten along with those persons whose names have already been mentioned. Ramendrasundar wrote an unique piece of introduction to the book "*Khukumanir Chhada*" edited by Jogendranath Sarkar in 1306 B. S. It is one of the best pieces of essay in Bengali language which speaks of the scientific approach to folklore. There were some other important folklorists at that time, about whom we will discuss in later volumes.

Though he was in the thick of his activity at Santiniketan, Tagore remembered with pleasure his association with country life in his younger days and of blessed memory were to him

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19. Interested reader may consult the article "Pasternak's use of Folklore, myth and epic song in *Doctor Zhivago*" by Mary and Paul Rowland in *Southern Folklore Quarterly*, Vol. XXV. No. 4. 1962.

## *Folklorists of Bengal*

the rurality of Shilaidah and Potisar, the robust way of life of the peasantry and the smack of folk-literature he got there. In "Chhinnapatra" he pointed out how he had his finger on the pulsation of the obscure but vivacious life of the country people. Here is an expression of feeling of Rabindranath quoted from "Chhinnapatra"—"In the evening the cloud hovers about when a pall of mystery surrounds the weal and woe of the populace knit together. The strain of their frailty and morality, that of prosperity and adversity, tuned into a singular melodious and plaintive bass note, issued forth as from the silvan valley of the river swelling with rain and went home into my heart." The poet's course of life identified itself with the impetuosity of the warbling river liting of its ripples. The mighty river beckoned him and escorted him to the Infinite. Tired out towards the evening with the day's toil the boatman would strike up a languid note and sang—

*Mon Majhi tor baitha ne re ami ar baite parlam na*

*Sara Jiban bailam baitha re, tore bhaittal bina ujay na*

(Oh helmsman of the boat of my mind, take charge of the helm now, I am tired of steering it all through my life. I wish indeed to go upstream but inspite of my best efforts the boat tends to go downstream.)

The richly symbolic and significant phrase of the folk song induced in him a spiritual and theological resonance, eventually making him a votary of folk-song. From his boyhood Rabindranath had a turn for folk-literature which developed into a pursuit in his later life. That he sought to promote its cause has been acknowledged in his work "Chhelebelā". The same acknowledgement is found in "Jibansmriti". In his boyhood the poet was intent on every thing that had the touch of folklore, myth, legends, fairy-tales, folk-tales, country ballads, folk-songs, anecdotes and performances of *Jatra*.<sup>2</sup>

In this way the seed of folk-culture unconsciously sprouted in the rich loam of his touchy mind and in course of time it sprang up into a full-grown tree with all its foliage, flowers and fruits. Rabindranath till then kept within

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20. Theatrical performances where edifying legendary and epic characters, common favourites with folk mind are introduced.

local environment and pursued the study of folk-literature from a distance. Thereafter, at the bidding of his father he went to look after his ancestral estate at Shilaidah. His sojourn there gave him direct taste of folk-literature. He discovered an intense piquancy in rural life, a life simple, unassuming, yet robust and vivacious. He developed warm friendship with the village-folks, spiritual persons like Gagan Harkara, Lalan Shah and others. They were definitely his lucky findings. The rich spiritual note of their pastoral songs made him undoubtedly deferentially disposed to the wealth of the traditions of rural Bengal.<sup>21</sup>

#### Folk-tunes

Rabindranath's poetic mind matured in the nursery of the *Bauls* and *Kirtaniyas*, who preach universal religion through their sublime spiritual songs. To quote Tagore again, "during my stay at Shilaidah when time and chance permitted, I used to associate with the *Bauls*, heard and learnt their songs. This explains why the wordings and spirit of *Baul* song are so much manifest in a fair number of my songs."<sup>22</sup> Let us recall a piece of Tagore's song, which have discernible trace of the influence of folk-song, such as, "*Ami kothay pabo tore, amar maner minush jere.*" This composition of Gagan Harkara is substantially echoed in his song "*Amar sonar Bangla ami tomal bhalobasi.*"

Rabindranath made a learned discussion on *Baul* song in the journal "Bharati" edited by him. Admittedly, almost all songs composed by Rabindranath in the days of the National movement were attuned to *Baul* songs. His pieces like—"Ami kan pete rai", "Ami tare khunje berai", "Jodi tor dak sune keu na ase"—are much patent. He was deft in introducing folk-tunes in his songs. Then again he harmonised European music and melody with those of Indian music. Soumendranath Tagore said, "Tagore tired of

21. Rabindranath-O-Loka Sahitya by Sankar Sen Gupta, Jugantar 8-5-1958.

22. Visva-Bharati News, February, 1962.

formalism and sophistication of Indian music turned towards folk-songs and immersed his being into the living stream of folk-melodies that welled out of the very soil. The rusticity of the melody forms of folk-songs, however, laid bare their innate insufficiency to Tagore; and in the fourth period of his melodic creation, Tagore blended folk-tunes with classical tunes to create new melodies."<sup>23</sup> "One cannot create new melodies by permanently emigrating from environment of *Ragas* and *Raginis*."<sup>24</sup> In the words of Rabindranath, "whatever liberties I may indulge in, I cannot completely overstep the boundries of *Ragas* and *Raginis*. I discovered long that while one could escape captivity of their dungeon their abode endures. I believe it will always be thus."<sup>25</sup> As an example, Soumendranath has stated again that "*Aji Bahibeh Basanta Pabana*" (the vernal breeze so gently wafts today) is based on Raga *Bahar* which is refashioned from a Hindi song..... Rabindranath borrowed and adopted the melodies of various provinces. He went further afield and culled western melodies to suit the themes of his songs in 'Balmiki Prativa'.<sup>26</sup>

#### Nursery-rhymes

Rabindranath observed thus : "*Bristi pare tapur tupur nadei elo ban*"—this piece of nursery rhyme worked like a magical charm in my boyhood in me and I still remember how it held me in an ecstasy. The more I recur to the spell of the ecstasy wrought by such a piece on my juvenile mind, the more I feel convinced of its worth and sweetness, I wonder that in this wide world much breath had been spent, much sweat spilled, utmost attempt made in order to initiate the folk mind into higher art forms, that is, epics, lyrics, spiritual discourses, ethics etc. But the folk mind is seen to be not at all receptive of the subtle forms. The thing is that it has proved to be a suitable medium quick to receive the crude

23. Tagore Centenary Supplement of Burmah-Shell News, 1961.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

forms like these ballads rhymes conveying incongruous, loose coarsely-spun ideas.”<sup>27</sup>

While discussing on the subject of “Rabindranath and the folk literature of Bengal” Dusan Zbavitel said, “Rabindranath deals with the folk-lyric in more general outline, and then he discusses two main subjects of the folk and popular poetry of Hindu Bengal—the Hara-Gauri theme and divine love of Lord Krishna and Radha. But, throughout his article, he keeps in the foreground one of the main feature of folk-poetry—its realism and deeply rooted feeling for reality, be it manifested in the song of the Padma boatman promising to bring for his beloved ‘a sari worth a rupee’ or in the many and varied vicissitudes of Shiva’s married life, clearly reflecting the problems of village families.....

“The inner realism of Bengali folk-poetry formed a kind of basis for nearly all mediaeval literature, from *Mangal Kavyas* to Bharatchandra; and Rabindranath gives a very poetic description in this statement: ‘As the roots of a tree are firmly bound together with the soil and its upper part is spread towards the sky, in the same way the lower part of a literature is always hidden, being to a large extent imprisoned in the soil of its mother country.....There is a ceaseless inner connection between the lower and the higher one. The blossoms, fruits, twigs and sprouts of that part which points to the sky cannot be compared with the lower roots of the soil; and yet those who do not in the least fail to see their similarity and affinity.”<sup>28</sup>

#### Other literary works

It is very difficult to say, to what extent folkloristic materials influenced Rabindranath to create his works as it is too intricate and a difficult problem. But, let us in this connection remember that the Bangiya Sahitya Parishat was established in 1301 B. S. and in the Vol. I, No. 1 of the organ of this organization he wrote first the article “Chhele-

27. *Loka Sahitya* by Rabindranath Tagore (1907).

28. *Folklore*, Vol. II, No. 1. 1961—Rabindranath and Folk literature of Bengal.

‘bhulano chhada’ in the same year. It can be presumed that Tagore collected these *chhadas* much earlier than 1301 B. S. Tagore’s work on folklore appeared during the period 1895 to 1899 when he was also busy with his creation ‘Sonar Tari’. It is interesting to trace the growth of pastoral element in the poems of “Sonar Tari” (Golden Boat). And here we notice first direct result of Poet’s sojourn in the countryside. New images, similies and metaphors are also observed this time. ‘Chitra’, ‘Chhinnapatra’, ‘Galpaguchcha’. [Influence of folk-motif is apparent in ‘Bimbabati (1298). ‘Rajar Chhele Rajar Meye’ (1298), ‘Suptotthita’ (1299) and in others]. He has successfully used myths, legends, and tales in his creation. Tagore’s love on folklore was apparent when he was twenty-two years old. In this time (1883) he wrote a criticism of the book “Sangit Sangraha” (collections of songs) where he pleaded for folklore materials very sympathetically. At his age of twenty-six (1886) he published “Kari O Komal” the poetic composition fool-proof of the influence exercised upon him by folk-literature. Tagore published his poetic work from 1887—1890 under the title *Manasi*, where we notice, his sincere urge for folklore study. In the period of ‘Manasi’ it seems that he is like a bird in a cage and confined within the restricted scope of his social circle. Of course, his creations in this period compared with his first writings certainly reached a higher stage; but his ideological conflict and the insufficient knowledge of life was apparant then. In 1891 he left for Potisar. Here he came in close contact with countryside. Let us quote ‘Badhu’ where he expresses the sorrows of a country-woman uprooted from her native village and married into the town where she does not find love or understanding. In ‘Badhu’ (wife) he narrated a fairy tale of Bengal in a decent manner.<sup>29</sup> His realistic short story from the countryside exemplify a true picture of Bengali village life. Tagore’s poem ‘Chaitali’ was published in 1896 where his observation on the beauties of Nature as well as the simple inhabitants of

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কোথায় আছ তুমি কোথায় মাগো  
কেমনে ভুলে তুই আছিস, হা গে  
উঠিলে নবশশী ছাতের 'পরে বসি  
আর কি রূপকথা বলিবি না গো।—বধু

the village and his thoughts over their lot are recorded. In "Samanya Lok", "Didi", "Parichay", "Ananta Path" etc. we find village-folk in modern Bengali poetry. And these village pictures are imbued with the warmth of poet's sympathy and his deep humanism. Rabindranath's extreme affection for folklore is also manifest in "Europe Jatrir Dairy" (Centenary Volume p. 238).

Tagore's 'Loka-Sahitya' comprises four articles, two on nursery rhymes, one on Kabiwalas and one on village literature. Besides, he also has written an article on Mansuruddin's 'Haramoni', a preface to the book 'Thakurmar Jhuli' of Dakshinaranjan Mitra-Majumdar and to others.

Although his book 'Loka-Sahitya' appeared in 1907, the articles were published in the following year : (i) *Chhelebhulano Chhada* in 1895, (ii) *Kabi Sangeet* in 1895, (iii) and *Gramya Sahitya* in 1899. In this connection, one point should be cleared. To a folklorist there is nothing vulgar.<sup>30</sup> But on the ears of Tagore who was a man of decency vulgar words had a jarring effect. Tagore gave evidence of his cultured mind by casting the vulgar words into a decorous mould. Unlike those who resort to such procedure, he had the goodness to explain himself<sup>31</sup>

We notice the development of Tagore and his work during

30. A Folklorist should never refuse to collect, and should never suppress, obscene materials simply because they are considered obscene. He may be justified, however, in withholding certain items from general publication.

—Herbert Halpert.

To some scholars obscene folklore seems to be close to the blood and bone of folklore and seems always to be most closely attached to acts involving bodily functions and genitalia..... Erotica is a part of every society. Its form, its degree of prevalence, help to set one group off from another. What to one group is obscene to another may be considered otherwise.

—Horace P. Beck.

Quoted from *Journal of American Folklore : Symposium on obscenity in Folklore*—Vol. 75 No. 297.

31. "বোন কাঁদেন বোন কাঁদেন খাটের খুরো ধরে ।

সেই যে বোন—."

এইখানে পাঠকদিগের নিকট অপরাধী হইবার আশঙ্কায় ছড়াটি শেষ করিবার পূর্বে দুই-একটি কথা বলা আবশ্যক বোধ করি ।.....



his sojourn in the countryside was disturbed to a certain degree, by political events of the 1897.

Dusan Zbavitel has observed again, "Rabindranath's approach to Bengali nursery-rhymes, and to Bengali folk-literature is different from the approach of most present-day folklorists. The latter study and analyse folk-poetry from various points of view, but rarely are they able to appreciate all its beauty, its literary qualities and merits, in short, to view it as part of country's literature and treat it as such.....

"It would be possible to take any part of Rabindranath's article and elaborate it into a comprehensive study testing his conclusions by a comparison with other folk-songs which are available; his comments on child psychology, as reflected in *Chhadās*, on their turn of phrase, etc., would for instance, provide ample and rewarding material for such a study."<sup>32</sup>

#### Folk motif in Drama

Rabindranath also used folkloristic material in dramatic works, as for instance, in his 'King of the Dark Chamber'. A Buddhist Jataka furnishes the main plot to his dramatic 'Raja' and 'Sapmochan'. 'The King of the Dark Chamber', a creditable English rendering of

বোনে বোনে কলহ না হওয়াই ভাল, তথাপি সাধারণত এরূপ কলহ ঘটয়া থাকে। কিন্তু তাই বলিয়া কলহটির মুখে এমন ভাষা ব্যবহার হওয়া উচিত হয় না যাহা আমি অল্প ভদ্র সমাজে উচ্চারণ করিতে কুণ্ঠিত বোধ করিতেছি।.....আমরা সেই গালটিকে অপেক্ষাকৃত অনতিরূঢ় ভাষায় পরিবর্তন করিয়া নিম্নে ছন্দ পূরণ করিয়া দিলাম :—

"বোন কাঁদেন, বোন কাঁদেন খাটের খুরো ধরে।

সেই যে বোন গাল দিয়েছেন 'স্বামী খাকী' বলে"।

(Loka-Sahitya)

Besides, Tagore's subtle decency can be proved by quoting his short stories and novels. He generally did not use the speech of the man in the street in his short stories and novels. And possibly that is why his novel could not attract the attention of a large number of readers. His chaste language and a very little use of idioms perhaps not liked by the commoners.

'Raja' has been highly appreciated far and wide as a valuable contribution to symbolic dramatic work. The materials for the play 'Raja' were picked up from *Kusa Jataka* (513). A German scholar observed in this connection, "he (Tagore) tried to derive the plot from an episode in one Rigvedic poems, the well-known love story of the royal male Pururavas and the divine female Urvashi."<sup>33</sup> (Heinrich Moyer).

Of late, Heinz Mode in a discussion on this subject has said, "Even in Tagore's adaptation of an old folk-story his glorification of human aspects of male rule and spiritual kingdom, or, as it has been expressed, of 'God trying to fulfil himself in creation', this change of accent and moral in symbolical guise cannot hide in inner weight of the woman-heroine of his play. It is really the queen Sudarsana who has our sympathy and who in her elementary humanity is nearest to us in sinful action and righteousness alike."<sup>34</sup>

In 1919 the poet made a concise adaptation of his work "Arupratan" for the stage. Heretofore, in 1919 the English version of *Raja*, the 'King of the Dark Chamber', was brought out. 'Sapmochan' was first published in 1931. It has already been stated that Rabindranath owed his plot for "Raja" and "Sapmochan" to "Mahavastu Abadan Kusa Jataka" that had formerly been picked up by Rajendralal Mitra from the Sanskrit Buddhist literature of Nepal.

Let us refer to Radhagobinda Basak who has observed, "Kusa Jataka portion formed a short narrative within four pages only in a skeleton structure. This summary of the story was the genesis of Tagore's two dramatic works. It must be felt as a wonder that Tagore by his genius and poetic power transformed this slender abstract into two highly beautiful dramas to which he added many songs composed by himself."<sup>35</sup>

Mode observed again, "No lesser than Heinrich Zimmer wrote in the ZDMG in 1929 an article on 'The King of the Dark Chamber' where he tried to derive the plot from an

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33. Folklore, Vol. I, No. 6. "Tagore's King of the Dark Chamber and its Folkloristic Background".

34. Ibid

35. Indo-Asian Culture, New Delhi, July, 1961.

episode in one of the Rigvedic poems the well-known love story of the royal male Pururavas and the divine female Urvashi.”<sup>36</sup>

If we probe into his works, we can spot enough of folkloristic component parts in a good number of them. This is to show how a paragon of genius like Rabindranath had given an exalted position to folklore and thereby advanced its cause.

It has been already stated that being a poet to the core, Tagore, on his part, sought only to discover what literary and poetic value the lores and rhymes had. He could have stressed, as his first concern, on the study of historical, anthropological or scientific implications of them. But that would have been quite a different thing from what he stood for—he would then fail to make others conscious of the literary wealth of these folklores.

Rabindranath was distinct from the generality of folklorists, his choice at folkloristic materials was also distinct from them.

#### Folk-cult

Discussion on folk-cult, the lore of our folk is characterised by a spirit of rivalry between one deity and another. A considerable number of scholars hold that cultural conflict between the Aryans and non-Aryans is symbolized in these lores. Tagore too shared this view. The readers of “*Kalantar*” know that he had shown how the long-standing contest for supremacy between these opposing civilizations at least yielded to a process of assimilation and synthesis. In his article “*Banga Bhasha O Sahitya*” he has discussed in detail how the folk-god (non-Aryan god) *Śiva* had made his way into the Aryan pantheon and occupied the most dignified position. Incidentally, we can cite his poems “*Kumar Sambhava*” and “*Kadambari*”, where we find a pen-picture of two warring communities (the upper class and the lower class of the people) upon the usage of animal sacrifice to propitiate the deity. In a lucidatory discourse on “*Sakti*”

cult he gave a dignified position to the characters of 'Mangal Kavya's thus : "It is to be noted that those on whom the goddess counted for propagation of her worship were not of noble birth. The downtrodden people derive consolation from upgrading process of goddess. The indigent one could not make both ends meet even from the sweat of his brow had the legacy of a golden pitcher through the grace of the protecting deity. The low-born despicable man was reformed to such an excellence that he got the hands of the princess of the kingdom of Kalinga in marriage."<sup>37</sup>

Patriotism was the main inspiration of his *Katha* published in 1900. Here he re-elaborated Buddhist legends, Marathi and Rajasthani ballads and Vaishanab beliefs. To him his countrymen were a part and parcel of large humanity. Tagore's stress was on the intrinsic values and the awakening interest in folklore and other forms of culture in all the fields. His original approach to folklore study had opened the way to Bengalee intellect. His theory on folklore study was based on his literary pursuit and mild disposition. At the time of Tagore there was no expert who can study folklore from a scientific angle nor there had any well-equipped laboratory or scientific instruments by which scientific method of works could be undertaken. Besides, there were no thinking in that light then. To explore folklore from socio-economic-historic and scientific points of view is a recent development. But Tagore established his own theory for the collection and implication of folklore materials and there is his unequal position amongst the folklorists of Bengal.

### Conclusion

But one thing should be made clear in this connection. This is not a critical essay on Tagore, nor have we tried to sit in judgement on him as our scope for the study on Tagore here is extremely limited. We have endeavoured here to ponder over his folkloristic works and wanted to focus attention on his resplendent activities.

We must not forget that Rabindranath could never have become what he was as a man or as a poet or as a forerunner for mass education and village reconstruction had he not stayed in the countryside and witnessed the village-folk. Tagore's eventful career helped him to mould his destiny not only as a social reformer but also affected his literature, music, education, philosophy and the way of life which he carved out for himself. Consequently, the poems he produced, the music he composed, the lectures he delivered, the letters he wrote, and the cultural movement of renaissance he initiated, all influenced the cultural stream of village-folks. So it can be safely said—Tagore became a poet of the world due to the impact of villages of India.

Tagore entered into wedlock in 1884 with Mrinalini Debi who bore him five children and died in 1902 when she was only twenty-nine years of age. Besides, he lost his daughter Renuka in 1904. In 1905 Poet lost his father Devendranath and in the same year 'Swadeshi Movement' started in Bengal. Tagore began to write poems which he published in the following year under the title "Kheya". The tragic events of the family death of his three children out of five are reflected in his works during this period. Rathindranath and Mira Devi survived, but in the next year of Rabindra Centenary celebrations (1962) Rathindra Nath expired leaving behind his only sister Mira Devi.

Bereavement took away the bloom from his household. He desired liberation from home-bound thoughts and actions and deployed himself into universal sphere of activity—a life-long activity directed towards humanism, world peace and amity. He had calls from different quarters for various constructive work, of which he proved himself worthy by scoring success after success. When he went to give shape to his plan for Santiniketan, he was hard put to it for resources. But he had the fortitude and determination to carry through his plan.

Rabindranath's variegated life indeed speaks for his versatility and holds us in wonder. An efficient administrator of his estate, the greatest poet of the modern times, an ingenious harmonist, an adept in graphic arts, an ideal organiser—in all his stations of life he made himself master of the affair that be. Of "Patra Sahitya" he has set too high a standard. He figured

also as a gifted editor. When death was going to close upon him on 7th August, 1941, he recited the following lines from the Hafiz :—

“The bell is tolling. I have heard the call. And am ready to depart with all my luggage.”\*\*

The words that Rabindranath used for the great Hindi Poet and Saint Tulsidas equally apply to him.

“He is rooted deep in the very soil of the country in the soul of the common folk.”\*\*

We bow to the memory of this great man and record here in a nutshell his regard for folklore.\*

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38. *Burmah-Shell News Tagore Centenary* 1961, Calcutta.

39. *Ibid.*

\*Rabindranath's surname Tagore is widely known and used these days as such. In reality, however, 'Tagore' is an anglicised corruption of his surname which is 'Thakur'. Bengalee surnames suffered corruption in the British days: 'Mukhopadhyaya' became 'Mukerjee', 'Gangopadhyaya' 'Ganguli', 'Basu' 'Bose' etc. It is felt that in states of India besides Bengal the actual Bengalee surnames should be learnt and used now.

P. S. Some of the passages Tagore's original Bengali have been translated into English.

## Bibliographical Notes

Rabindranath had a mind which touched all the fringes of our life. He had not intruded in the sphere of so-called politics but his reflections on political problems are of immense value possibly because of the disinterested attitude of which they are the outcome. His Sriniketan and other social works have not yet been properly appreciated by the people of his land but as time passes on his words are becoming brighter with the light of their inner truth. We have listed here only a few of his writings where the poet had discussed and recreates with imaginative sympathy and emotional exatration the spirit of the folk-tales and other materials, knowing fully well how incomplete the list is.

1883 *Bauler Gan*—Published in 'Bharati', Baisakh 1290. Included in *Samalochana, Rachanavali, Achalita Sanskaran* 2.

- 1884 **Hate Kalame**—Published in 'Bharati', Ashwin 1291.
- 1887 **Hindu bibaha**—Published in 'Bharati', Ashwin 1294. Included in Samaj, Rachanavali 12.
- 1890 **Mantri Abhisekh**—Published in 'Bharati', Baisakh 1297. Rachanavali, Achalita Sanskaran 2.
- 1891 **Nutan O Puratan**—A part of the preface to the book 'Europe Yatrir Diary'. Included in 'Swadesh', Rachanavali 11  
Chhinnapatrabali, Letter No. 15.  
Akalbibaha—(?) 'Hitabadi', Sravan 1298.
- 1892 **Sikshar Herpher**—Published in 'Sadhana', Paush 1299, Included in Siksha, Read in Rajshahi.
- 1893 **Ingraj O Bharatbasi**—Read at Chaitanya Library under the Presidentship of the great Bengali novelist Bankim-Chandra Chatterji.  
Chhinnapatrabali, Letter to Indira Devi No. 81. 96, 103 111.
- 1894 **Bideshi Atithi O Deshiya Atithya**—Published in 'Sadhana', Sravan 1301. Written on Hammergren, a Swedish who came to India to see the land of Rammohan Roy.  
Apamaner Pratikar—Published in 'Sadhana', Bhadra 1301. Included in Raja Praja, Rachanavali 10.  
Subicharer Adhikar—Published in 'Sadhana', Agrahayan 1301. Included in Raja Praja. Rachanavali 10.  
Meyeli Chhada—Published in 'Sadhana', Bhadra-Aswin 1301. Included 'Loka-Sahitya'. This article was printed in the name of 'Chhelebhulano Chhada'. Rachanavali 6.  
Abdarer Aiyin—Published in 'Sadhana', Magh 1301.
- 1895 **Chhelebhulano Chhada**—Published in Bangiya Sahitya Parishat Patrika, Vol I. No. I. Included in Loka-Sahitya, Rachanavali 6.  
Kavisangit—Published in Bangiya Sahitya Parishat Patrika. Included in Loka-Sahitya Rachanavali 6.

- 1898 **Kantharodh**—A strong protest against the Sedition Bill passed by the British Government in 1898. Published in 'Bharati', Baisakh 1305. Included in 'Raja Praja', Rachanavali 10.

**Bhasa bichchhed**—A discussion of the Government's efforts to divide the people of Eastern India by whipping up lingual frenzy. Published in 'Bharati', Sravan 1305.

**Gramya Sahitya**—Published in 'Bharati', Falgun 1305. Included in Loka Sahitya, Rachanavali 6.

Letter written to Mahim Thakur, published in Visva-Bharati No. 12.

- 1901 **Byadhi O Pratikar**—Published in 'Banga Darshan', Baisakh 1308. Written as a rejoinder to Ramendra Sundar Trivedi's "Samajik Byadhi O Tahar Pratikar".

**Hindutwa**—Published in 'Bangadarshan', Sravan 1308.

**Brahman**—Published in 'Bangadarshan', Ashar 1309. Written to express the feelings of the people against the beating of a brahmin subordinate by a Britisher.

- 1904 **Swadeshi Samaj**—Read at a meeting organised by Chaitanya Library, Calcutta in Sravan 1311. Included in Atmashakti.

English translation—"Towards Universal Man" 1961 under society and State.

**Swadeshi Samaj Prabandher Parisista**—Published in 'Bangadarshan', Aswin 1311.

**Saphalatar Sadupay**—Read in the Scottish Churches College Hall, Calcutta on 27th Falgun 1311 to protest against some modification suggested by the Government in its education policy.

- 1905 **Vilaser Phans**—Published in 'Bhandar', Magh 1312. Included in Samaj, Rachanavali 12.

**Abastha O Byabastha**—Read at a public meeting at Town Hall, Calcutta on 25th August 1905 to protest



### *Folklorists of Bengal*

against the proposed division of Bengal by Lord Curzon. Published in 'Bangadarshan', Aswin 1312. Included in Atmashakti.

Chhafrader Prati Sambhasan—Read at a meeting organised by the Bangiya Sahitya Parishat, Calcutta to give a reception to the University students. Included in Atmashakti.

- 1906 Deshnayak—Published in 'Bangadarshan', Jaistha 1313. Read on 15th Baisakh at a public meeting, expressing the need of finding out one leader and unify the national forces. The poet asked the people to accept Surendranath as the National Leader.

Jatiya Vidyalaya—Included in Shiksha, Rachanavali 12.

- 1907 Loka-Sahitya—Published first in the 3rd Part of Tagore's prose selection by Majumdar Library in 1314. Included in Rabindra Rachanavali. 6

Loka-Sahitya comprises four articles. The first one is devoted to Bengali Nursery-rhymes. The second contribution to the same subject—both these articles were written on 1895. The third article written in 1895 and last part i. e. Gramya Sahitya in 1899.

- 1908 Sabhapatir Abhibhasan—Published in 'Bangadarshan', Falgun 1314. Presidential address in Pabna Provincial Conference.

Path O Patheya—Published in 'Bangadarshan', Jaistha 1315. Included in Raja Praja.

Samasya—Published in 'Prabasi', Ashar 1315. Included in Raja Praja.

Sadupaya—Published in 'Pravasi', Sravan 1315. Included in Raja Praja.

- 1914 Lokahita—Published in 'Sabujpatra', Bhadra 1321. Included in Kalantar, Rachanavali 24.

- 1915 Pallir Unnati—Address delivered at Bangla Hita Sadhar Mandali, Published in 'Pravasi', Baisakh 1322.

- 1918 ~~Samabaya~~—Published in 'Bhandar', Sravan 1325.  
 Bhumilakshmi—Published in 'Bhumilakshmi', Ashwin 1325, Included in Palli Prakriti.
- 1919 Shakti Puja—Published in 'Pravasi', Kartick 1326.
- 1921 Satyer Ahvan—Published in 'Pravasi', Kartick 1328. Included in Kalantar. English Translation 'The Call of the Truth'.  
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*For further studies on Tagore's thoughts on social philosophy, rural reconstruction and folklore the following works are essential :*

- |                 |                        |                   |
|-----------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Kalantar     | 2. Russiar Chiti       | 3. Loka Sahitya   |
| 4. Swadesh      | 5. Siksha              | 6. Samabaya Neeti |
| 7. Samaj        | 8. Samuha              | 9. Atma Sakti     |
| 10. Varatvarsha | 11. Greater India—1921 | 12. Raja Proja    |



*Folklorists of Bengal*



Born 1863

Died 1938

Saratchandra Mitra



SARATCHANDRA MITRA  
(1863—1938)

**T**he second-half of the nineteenth century was palmy days for Bengal from socio-cultural, literary and political points of view. It was a period when social forces were in a melting pot. Pandit Sibnath Sastri, an outstanding scholar and social reformer of the then Bengal, characterised the span between 1856 and 1861 as the golden one. This brief spell had seen panoramic view of various memorable events. Movement for widow marriage, India's first War of Independence, Indigo farmers' unrest, mightily penmanship of Harish against the Indigo planters, publication of renowned newspaper "Somprakas", appearance of National Theatre parties, demise of the great Pandit Eshwarchandra Vidyasagar, meteoric rise of Michael Madhusudan, re-orientation of Brahmo Samaj by Keshabchandra Sen—all thronged that revolutionary period and brought about a fundamental change in the social and political outlook of Bengal.

At that time there was an unassuming person whom none except for a few could recognise. Perhaps it will not be an exaggeration if we say, he along with a few, laid the foundation for study of folklore in Bengal. He made an invaluable contribution towards the assessment of folk traditions, their social and cultural implications and opened up a new vista for socio-cultural and anthropological study. His works were later recognised by the scholars and researchers all over India and outside and encouraged future scholars to dig deep into folklore to bring out its treasures to public view. This personage was Saratchandra Mitra, whose works have been indispensable for those who intend to study or work in the field of Indian folklore. This is amply proved by folklorists who frequently



quote him as an authority at the foot-notes or in the text of their articles. His scholarly work is, so to speak, a reservoir of cool water to quench our thirst.

Saratchandra was born on the 15th November, 1863 and died on the 15th December, 1938. In his long course of life of 76 years, he had worked at different stations of activity. In the main he was a Law Practitioner but his professional career could not stand in the way of his unflagging interest in his researches in social and cultural anthropology and folklore. His works won for him so much appreciation and admiration that the University of Calcutta thought it fit to place him in charge of the Department of Anthropology in 1921, which was just introduced as an academic discipline in India. He was the first professor of the first department of anthropology in the country. It was unfortunate that he could not shoulder the responsibility for long on account of physical disability. After a brief period of service of five years loss of sight overtook him and he had to retire from the University service in 1926. To fill up the gap caused due to Professor Mitra's retirement Dr. B. S. Guha who returned to India from U. S. A. on completion of his studies was invited to its faculty and he joined in the University of Calcutta as the Professor of Anthropology in 1926. Dr. Guha left University service and joined in the Government of India as an Anthropologist in the next year. Mitra survived after his retirement for nearly twelve years. His dim eyesight could not prevent him from leading a scholarly life. At the fag end of his life he wrote many articles, graced many functions, encouraged scholars and researchers. It will be clear from the following life sketch that Saratchandra Mitra entered anthropology through a different discipline. He was a student of English literature and Law in which he received his Master's and Law degrees from the University of Calcutta but English literature and Law were not his only interest. Folklore study, antiquarianism and the kindred topics were fascinating to him. This was the time when along with various other things the country had seen phenomenal anthropological activities.

The Ethnographic Survey of India was initiated in 1905. Sir Herbert Risley's classic "The Peoples of India" appeared in

1908 which worked as magic wand for the study of the people. In 1916 R. P. Chanda published "The Indo-Aryan Races" and in this year Sir Grierson's monumental work "Linguistic Survey of India" appeared. Prior to this Professor R. B. Dixon carried out an anthropological survey in India in 1912. Saratchandra, coming as he did from a very well-placed family, could not escape the intellectual tide of the country. His contact with the oriental scholars and village folks alike helped him in collecting and writing articles on folklore and to switch over to anthropology. Saratchandra was gratefully excited with field work. He visited several places of North Bihar and West Bengal for the collection of traditional oral literature, myths and legends.

#### Childhood

He was born in the house of Mitras of Hogulkuria.<sup>1</sup> The founder of this family was Rammohan Mitra. He lived in Borisha, a village some miles away from Calcutta. The depredation of the Mahrattas, locally *Burgis*, made life and property insecure at Borisha. Rammohan shifted to Hogulkuria, a place within the jurisdiction of *Sutanuti Taluk*.<sup>2</sup> Saratchandra's father Narasinghachandra Mitra was a pleader and legal adviser to Hathwa Raj (a principality in Bihar). His mother's name was Nistarini Dasi. Narsingha Mitra died at the age of about 60 or 61 years (11th July, 1905) leaving behind a son and one daughter. His sons were Amulyachandra Mitra and Saratchandra Mitra while the name of the daughter was Sailabala Dasi. At the age of 42 Saratchandra lost his father. He was the third child of his parents. His elder brother Amulyachandra died in his teens and sister Sailabala was married to Purnachandra Chaudhuri of Simla.

#### Education

Saratchandra was educated, firstly, in the Calcutta Training Academy, then for a short time only (during 1875) in the Z I

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1. A parish in north Calcutta, now known as "Goabagan."

2. A kind of county held under lease by the East India Company.

School at Chapra. From Chapra he came back to Calcutta and got admitted in the Metropolitan Institution, founded by Pandit Eshwarchandra Vidyasagar in Calcutta and then in the City School, Calcutta, from which institution he passed the Entrance Examination in 1880 in the First Division and obtained a Junior Scholarship of Rs. 10/- per mensem. He passed the F. A. Examination from the Metropolitan Institution (now Vidyasagar College) and received a Senior Scholarship of Rs. 20/- per mensem. From the same Institution he took the B. A. degree with Honours in English in 1885 and received Vidyasagar's Scholarship of Rs. 30/- per mensem. He passed the M. A. Examination in English in 1886. In 1888, he passed B. L. Examination.

#### Marriage

When Saratchandra was of twenty-two years he married Sarasibala Ray, the second daughter of Dineshchandra Ray, the then Subordinate Judge of Gaya district. She is still living, bordering now the age of about 91 years. All his three sons are well placed in life. His youngest son Sri Tinkari Mitra is a reputed Engineer, second son Sri Satkari Mitra is a Professor, grandsons, granddaughters and other relatives all are well placed in their respective circles.

#### Service

On the completion of his academic career he joined the Chapra Bar in May 1889 and began to practise under the guidance of his father, Narsinghachandra Mitra, who was the then Government Pleader of Saran. Finding the Bar uncongenial for him, he got himself enrolled as a candidate for a post in the Subordinate Judicial Service. But, subsequent to his enrolment, the Calcutta High Court introduced a new rule which prescribed that a candidate must not get a Gazetted appointment before the completion of his 28th year Saratchandra not having fulfilled the requirements of this new rule, did not become a Munsif. He, however, stuck to the Bar till 5 February, 1894, when he was appointed Superintendent of Survey and Settlement in the Huthwa

Raj, and subsequently Law Superintendent in the same estate, in which capacity he served till 31st March, 1903. But the Court of Wards under whose management the Hathwa Raj was abolished the post of Law Superintendent in order to give effect to a scheme of retrenchment. He, therefore, reverted to the Chapra Bar in January 1904, where he practised till 13th November, 1911.

On the retirement of his father Saratchandra was appointed the Law Agent to the Huthwa Raj at Chapra. As the Huthwa Raj was released from the management of the Court of Wards with effect from the 14th November, 1911, the Maharani Saheba of Huthwa appointed him as the Assistant Manager. On this appointment the *Bihar Herald* wrote (Saturday, the 25th November, 1911) :—

“The appointment of Babu Saratchandra Mitra, M.A., B.L., Pleader and a member of the Chapra Bar as Assistant Manager (of the Hathwa Raj) is undoubtedly a change for the better. The late Assistant Manager under the Court of Wards made himself very unpopular among the people who came in contact with him. Babu Saratchandra's appointment is not a new one. He served the Raj in another capacity for ten years and, on the death of his father Babu Narasinghachandra Mitra, was appointed the retained Pleader of the Raj at Chapra. He is a distinguished graduate of the Calcutta University; and the valuable papers he has contributed to the best periodicals of the day have extorted admiration from literary men. We believe, he will discharge the duties of his new post to the satisfaction of the Maharani Saheba with great credit to himself.”

He worked in this capacity for about 10 years till he joined the University of Calcutta in 1921.

From his boyhood, Saratchandra's tastes lay in the direction of literary pursuits. He was a good reader. His favourite subjects of study were History, Folklore, Biography, Travels, Archaeology, Anthropology and Ethnography. He was a frequent contributor to the best periodicals of those days. His articles entitled “The Legends of Buddha in Indo-Hellenistic Art” appeared in the *East and West*, August 1913, attracted the attention of the scholars of Great Britain.

The *Evening Gazette of Aberdeen* of Thursday, the 28th August, 1913, noticed it as follows :

"Some strange legends of Buddha are discussed by Mr. Saratchandra Mitra in the August (1913) number of *"East and West"*, an ably-conducted Indian Magazine published in Bombay. Mr. Mitra gives a most interesting description of the sculptures in Peshawar most of which were discovered in 1907 in the course of excavation at the small village of Sahirabahlol, situated on a high mound about seven miles to the north-west of Mardan. In the Peshawar Museum, Mr. Mitra says, is 'the most important collection of sculpture of the Indo-Hellenistic School of Indian Art' in that country. A good deal of legendary lore has gathered about the life of Buddha, and a few of these legends have furnished motifs for the scenes depicted on some of the sculptures."

#### Inspiration

As is well known the basic inspiration for Socio-cultural or folkloristic works come to a worker not only from the objective realisation of the needs of time, but from certain fundamental and personal urges which had been haunting a worker from his early childhood.

Saratchandra was moved by the vast but unexplored folkloristic materials and he realised their utility in the proper evaluation of our heritage. He collected materials, wrote articles but have not tried to formulate them critically in book form. Saratchandra was just a city-born townsman who established contact with the folk people while he was working in Huthwa Raj State as the Superintendent of Survey and Settlement in 1894 when he was 31 years old. Thus, as one living amidst the people and not as pedantic outsider did he receive his inspiration to dig deep into the folkloristic material from among the people.

#### Researches

From the student life he began his studies of the folklore and folk-belief prevalent in North Bihar, which he continued till the very end of his life. A very prolific writer, he contributed about 183 papers to the *Journal of the Anthropological*

Society of Bombay, 97 to the Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society, Bangalore, 37 to the National Magazine, Calcutta, 34 to the Man-in-India, Ranchi, 21 to the Royal Asiatic Society of Calcutta, 21 to the Hindusthan Review, 12 to the Journal of Department of Letters, University of Calcutta and 45 to the Bihar and Orissa Research Society Journal, as also a number of papers, it is observed, under a pseudonym ( "Aescyem" ? ) to the Calcutta Review. So far as could be gathered he wrote only one article in Bengali language "Bharati", a journal of the Tagore family.

The bulk of his papers appeared in the journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay. He was considered to be one of the pioneers of Social and Cultural Anthropological Studies in India and made valuable contributions of myths, customs and folk-lore of this country. His knowledge in comparative folk-lore was indeed vast, and his "Studies in Bird and Plant Myths" was regularly published in the Journal of the Mythic Society of Bangalore, are unique of its kind. Besides, he contributed one article in the journal of the Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, London, one article in "Notes and Queries", Pioneer Press, Allahabad, two articles in "East and West", Bombay.

We may observe repetitions of some articles in some journals with modification made by him here and there as and when further relevant materials might have been available to him. Some articles had also been published without any alteration in the text, having slight modification in the titles.

#### Honour

In 1895, he was elected a Corresponding Member of the Anthropological Society of Bombay. Since then he was an active member of this Society. At the Silver Jubilee Meeting held on the 7th February, 1912 in the Bombay Town Hall, the President Sir Basil Scott (then Chief Justice of the High Court of Bombay), in the course of his Presidential address, spoke as follows :

"Before I close my few observations I should like to call attention to the most prominent workers who have helped the Society during the last twentyfive years. The names of many

of them will be unknown to most of those at this meeting ; but, nevertheless, they are the names of persons to whom the Society owes much.....At that time, Mr. Kedernath Basu was our Bengali contributor, and he furnished a large number of papers during the early years of the Society. His place has been taken by a contributor who happily still favours the Society his assistance. I refer to Saratchandra Mitra who is, according to Mr. Modi's resume of the Society's work, the most prolific of our members, having actually supplied a larger number of papers to the Society's journal than Mr. Modi himself."

Sri Mitra was a man of reserve but of amiable nature. He maintained distance with colleagues and others which, of course, lead for the formation of an idea about him that he was a man of arrogant type. However, he had many friends all over India and outside.

Saratchandra Mitra's contributions are not well evaluated so far. We have, however, catalogued his articles in the attached bibliography for judging Mitra by his writings. Let competent researchers come forward and take this job. There are scope for compiling selected articles\* of Mitra on folklore in a book form. In him the Indian anthropologists and folklorists lost a most erudite scholar.

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\*The manuscript are being prepared for the book entitled "Selected Essays on Indian Folklore by Saratchandra Mitra" under the general editorship of Smt.Durga Bhagvat and Sri Sankar Sen Gupta.

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**VOL. IX No. 7, 1899**

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- 67. Some Ho Riddles.

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Vol. XI No. 3, 1901

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Vol. XI No. 4, 1901

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Vol. XIV No. 3, 1904

129. Primitive religion in the Ranchi district.
130. Observations on Oraon religion and customs.

Vol. XIV No. 4, 1904

131. Tibetan folklore from Kalimpong.
132. Cosmological myths of the Biharis and its Santali and American Indian parallels.
133. Prevalance of Cannibalism among the Biharies of Chhotanagpur.

Vol. XIV No. 5, 1904

134. Mundari legends and customs regarding the origin of the names of Ranchi and its suburbs (contd. next issue).

Vol. XIV No. 6, 1907

135. Mundari legends and customs regarding the origin of the names of Ranchi and its suburbs (contd. Vol. XV, No. 3).
136. A Note on the Kolarian belief about the Neolithic Celts.
137. Notes on a few recent instances of Anthropological interest.

Vol. XIV No. 7, 1904

138. Cults of the maritime deities in Lower Bengal.<sup>c</sup>
139. King Lear in the Punjabi folklore.
140. Ancient Indian apologue of the helping animal type and its Bengali apologue.

141. A Punjabi nursery story and its Bengali parallel.
142. Human sacrifice among the Birhors of Chhotanagpur.
143. Bihari folktale of the wicked queen type (after Vol. XI, No. 8).
144. Folklore about Jagannath as connected with a turtle and a crow.
145. A few village deities of the Faridpur district in Eastern Bengal.

Vol. XV No. 1, 1905

146. Prevalence of human sacrifice in Ancient Orissa.
147. Kolarian folk-belief about the magical efficacy of the spoken word for exorcising away evil spirits.
148. Kolarian belief about the Neolithic Celts.

Vol. XV No. 2, 1905

149. Thado Kerki accumulative droll of the "Man and the Shrimp" type.
150. Thado Kerki belief about the War Lions.
151. Place names in Jalpaiguri district.
152. A few ancient Indian Amulets and Charms.
153. Ancient Indian Dream-lore.
154. Ancient Indian beliefs about the origin of Childbirth.
155. Mundari legends and customs regarding the origin of the names Ranchi etc. (concluded).
156. Ghost-lore from the Jalpaiguri district.

Vol. XV No. 3, 1905

157. Parallelism between the Mahabharat legend about the disrobing of Draupadi and a tradition recorded in the Japanese Kamakusashi.

Vol. XV No. 5, 1905

158. Human sacrifice to the Goddess Saraswati.
159. Human sacrifice to a Goddess deity in Southern India.



160. Folklore Notes from Northern India.
161. Tiger or War Tiger.
162. Some remarks on the origin of Lycanthropy.
163. Notes on the Godling Mahakala, worshipped by the Rajbansis
164. Notes on the rain God of the Rajbansis
165. Human sacrifice to the Goddess Kali.
166. Notes on the North Bihar belief about the water deity.
167. A few modern charms for exorcising away insects and pests
168. Notes on the Godlings and Goddesslings of South Bihar
169. Exorcism of disease spirits.
170. Witch-craft and disease spirits
171. Ghost-lore from South Bihar
172. Worship of the Demon Rahu.

## Vol XV No. 6, 1905

173. Magic and human sacrifice in Medieval and Northern Bengal
174. Water-spirits in Bihar and Bengal
175. Parallelism between the Mahabharat legend about the wooing and winning Kunti and a Toda myth
176. Nath sect and Yugi caste.
177. Women's folk-rites from the district of Monghyr
178. Tibetan weather superstition.

## Vol. XVI No. 2, 1906

179. Recent instance of self-immolation for propitiating a God.

Hindustan Review, Allahabad

April, 1906.

Hindustan Review, Allahabad

December, 1916

2. The proposed Patna Museum and natural history.

July, 1916

3. The worship of the Mother Earth.

January, 1917

4. Light from the recent Archaeological Excavations at Patna

March, 1917

5. The worship of the "Sylvan Goddesses".

August, 1917

6. Three folksongs from Eastern Bengal.

September, 1917

7. The festival of cold food in Bengal and Chirra

April, 1918

8. On an ancient Indian custom

May-June, 1918

9. Some recent researches into the origin of Siva worship festival.

July, 1918

10. On the English and Indian Customs of toasting the Fruit-Trees

August, 1918

11. On a survival of Savage Philosophy

September, 1918

12. On the "Cloutie's Craft" in India.

March, 1919

13. On the cosmogonic myth of the Santals.

April, 1919

14. The influence of Kabir's teachings in Northern India.

June, 1919

15. On the "Gadara" country of the Ahirs of Bihar.

May-June, 1920

16. Glimpses of domestic life in Mediaeval Bengal.

May-June, 1921

17. On the vestiges of Buddhism in the District of Murshidabad, Bengal.

### Journal of Letters, University of Calcutta

The following articles appeared in the above journal from 1916 to 1927.

#### Vol. IV

1. On a Bihari ceremonial worship of the Totemistic origin.

#### Vol. IV

2. On the Dharma festival of North Bihar and its Munda analogues.

#### Vol. VIII

3. On the Cult of Sonaraya in Northern Bengal. (Cult of Sonaraya in Rajshahi appeared in the Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay, Vol. XII, No. 3 & Vol. XIII, No. 3).  
4. On the cult of Sonaraya in Eastern Bengal.

#### Vol. X

5. On an Accumulative Droll of Eastern Bengal and on a Mussalmani legend about the Sylvan Saint Bana Bibi and Tiger Deity Dakhsinaraya.

#### Vol. XI

6. On a legend from South Bihar.  
7. On two new types of Accumulative Drolls.

#### Vol. XIV

8. On the cult of Gorakshanath in Eastern Bengal.  
9. On two Accumulative Drolls of the Prawn and the Crow type.

**Vol. XV**

10. On the cult of the Sun-God in Mediaeval Eastern Bengal.
11. On the Silaris or Hiralis of Eastern Bengal.
12. On four Mussalmani folk-songs from the district of Chittagong in Eastern Bengal. (Sir Asutosh Mukherjee Silver Jubilee Volume, 1927).

**National Magazine, Calcutta**

**Vol. IV, 1890.**

1. The Indian Museum and Indian Archaeology.

**Vol. VI, 1892**

2. A coincidence in folklore.

**Vol. VII, 1893.**

3. On two supposed cases of children reared by wild animals.

**Vol. IX, 1895.**

4. Kings and Beards.

**Vol. X, 1896.**

5. Original scientific research in Bengal.

**Vol. XIII, 1899.**

6. On the feeding of animals in captivity.
7. On a recent instance of the use of the nudity spell for rain-making in Northern Bengal.
8. On the worship of the deity Hanumana in Orissa.

**Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal**

**Vol. LXII, Part III, No. 3, 1898.**

1. On some superstitions regarding drowning and drowned persons.

**Vol. LXII, No. 3, 1898.**

2. On some beliefs in a Being or Animal which is supposed to guard Hidden Treasure.

Vol. LXIV, Part I, 1895

3. North Indian folk-lore about thieves and robbers.

Vol. LXV, Part III, 1896

4. Indian folk-lore beliefs about the Tiger (3rd instalment).

Vol. LXV, Part III, No 1, 1896

5. Note on a curious tradition current in the Huthwa Raj

Vol. LXV, Part III, No. 1, 1896

6. On the Harparwor or the Bihari women's ceremony for producing rain (Also reprinted in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of London for July 1897)

Vol LXVII, Part III, No 1, 1898

7. On a rain-ceremony from the district of Mushdabad, Bengal

Vol LXVII, Part III, No. 1, 1898

8. On the Lizard in Indian Superstition and folk-medicine

Vol. LXVII, Part III, No. 2, 1898

9. Bengali and Bihari folk-lore about Birds, Part 1.

Vol. LXVII, Part III, No. 2, 1898

10. On coincidences between some Bengali Nursery Stories and some south Indian folk-tales

Vol LXVIII, Part III, No 1, 1899

11. Bengali and Bihari folk-lore about Birds, Part II.

Vol. LXX, Part III, No. 1, 1901

12. Riddles current in Bihar.

Vol. LXXX, Part III, No. 2, 1901

13. An Accumulative Droll and Rhyme from Bihar with remarks on Accumulative Drolls.

Vol. LXXI, Part III, No. 1, 1902

14. On the North Indian Folk-lore about the Tiger, Part I.

Vol. XXVII, No. 2, 1931

15. On the worship of the deity Jalpesvara in Jalpai-guri in Northern Bengal.

Vol. XXIV, No 1, 1933

16. On a few ancient Indian amulets and charms

Vol. XXX, No 1, 1934

- 17 On the worship of plough in North Bihar

Vol XXX, No 1, 1934

- 18 A Note on the agricultural deities Sama and Chako in North Bihar

Vol XXX, No 1, 1934

19. On plant-lore from Bihar

Vol XXX, No 1, 1934

- 20 On a curious cult of Orissa

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The following articles appeared in the above journal from a period from 1916 to 1938

June, 1916

- 1 Some North Indian charms for the cure of Ailments.

September, 1917

2. A folktale of a new type from North Bihar and its variants

June, 1918

3. On the use of the swallow-worts in the ritual, sorcery, and leechcraft of the Hindus and the pre-Islamic Arabs

, September, 1918

4. Further note on the use of the swallow-worts in the ritual of the Hindus.

\* December, 1918

5. On a Mahabharata folktale of the 12th and 13th century

June, 1919

6. The Mango tree in the marriage-ritual of the aborigines of Chottanagpur and Santal Parganas.

September, 1920

7. On a Bihar charm for the rain-compelling and rain-stopping.

December, 1920

8. On the worship of the pipal tree in North Bihar.

March-June, 1924

9. Studies in the cults of the district of Champaran in North Bihar.

June, 1922

10. Studies in the cults of the District of Champaran. The Cult of the Godling Bircehe Deo.

March, 1926

11. On a Santali folktale of the Hero and Deity type.
12. On a Ho folktale of the wicked queen's type (contd. March, 1928).
13. Note on human sacrifice among the Santals.

March, 1927

14. On a Satyapir legend in Santali guise.

June, 1927

15. On the Indian folk-belief about the Corpse Eating the Winding-Sheet in which it is Swathed.

March, 1928

16. Further note on human sacrifice among the Santals.

March, 1928

17. Further Note on a Ho folktale of the wicked queen's type.

June, 1928

18. Notes on tree-cults in the district of Patna in South Bihar.

September, 1918

19. The Dog-Bride in Santali and Lepcha folklore.

September, 1928

20. The caterpillar-boy and the caterpillar-husband in Santali and Lohit Naga folklore.

September, 1928

21. The Frog in North-Indian rain-compelling rites.

September, 1928

22. Note on dog-worship in the Hazaribagh district in Chotanagpur.

September, 1928

23. Note on a recent instance of human sacrifice for discovering hidden treasures.

December, 1928

24. Note on the Birhor legend about Ravana's abduction of Sita.

December, 1928

25. Notes on some South Bihari Godlings on fishery and hunting.

March-June, 1929

26. On the North Bihari cult of the Goddessling Turhari and its Bengali analogues.

March-June, 1929

27. A note on Human sacrifice among the Bihors of Chhotanagpur.

• March-June, 1929

28. On a Birhor folk-tale of the wicked queen's type.

September-December, 1922

29. Further notes on the dog-bride in the Santali and Lepcha folklore.



September-December, 1929

30. On the Indian folk-tales of the substituted later type.
31. On an ancient Indian beast apologue and its Punjabi parallel.
32. Studies in the folk-lore of North Bihar.
33. The Indigent Brahmin and the helpful Birds.
34. The Magic Fiddle that babbled out the Raja's secret.
35. Note on a recent instance of human sacrifice from the district of Samabampur in Orissa.
36. A note on fetish-worship in the Jalpaiguri District in Northern Bengal.
37. A Note on the worship of the river Tista by the Nepalese of the Jalpaiguri District in Northern Bengal.
38. A note on the Nepalese belief about a particular individual's being permanently obsessed by a deity.
39. Further notes on the Kolarian belief about the Neolithic Celts.
40. Note on the vestiges of Totemism among the Binds of Bihar.
41. Notes on the cult of the Godling Naga in South Bihar and on a rain-compelling rite connected therewith.
42. On the cult of the Godling Kasi Baba among the Binds of Bihar.
43. A note on a curious custom of Santal Paraganas.
44. On the cult of the Godling Bir Kuar in the Palamau District in Chotanagpur.

**Man in India**

Vol. II, 1922

1. On the cult of the tree-goddess in Eastern Bengal.

Vol. II, 1922

2. Supplementary remarks on the foregoing Notes.

Vol III, 1923

3. On the cult of the Godlings of Disease in Eastern Bengal.

Vol. III, 1923

4. Water-spirits in North Bihar.
5. Notes on Kali-Nautch in the District of ~~Bacca~~ in Eastern Bengal (with D. N. Mazumdar).
6. Parallelism between Malay and a Chiru aetiological folk-tale.
7. Champaran Bihari's belief about the call-note of the Indian Cuckoo.
8. The Champaran Bihari's belief about the Indian Weaver Bird.
9. The Champaran Biharis' belief about the Cobra and the Dhaman.
10. Supplementary remarks on the paper "Sympathetic magic based on the analogy or similarity of names".

Vol. IV, 1924

11. On a Meitei apologue and its Bengali variant.

Vol. V, 1925

12. On the cult of the jujube tree.

Vol. VI, 1926

13. On some beast apologues of a new type.
14. On a recent instance of the method of Divination by means of a bewitched cup.
15. On two Dusun aetiological myths about the paddy plant.
16. Note on a taboo forbidding the son-in-law to meet or touch his mother-in-law.

Vol. VII, 1927

17. On the Indian folk belief about the foundation-sacrifice.
18. On a Bengali magical rite for the prevention of apprehended hydrophobia.

## Vol. VIII, 1927

19. On the cult of the Maritime deities in lower Bengal.
20. On two recent instances of exorcism from Southern and Eastern Bengal.
21. On two more Santali folk-tales of "Der Mann und Fuchs" type.
22. On a far-travelled Star myth.

## Vol. IX, 1928

23. On the parallelism between the Mahabharat legend about the disrobing of Draupadi and a tradition recorded in the Japanese Kamakurashi.
24. The magical conflict in Santali, Bengali and Ao Naga folk-lore.
25. On the cult of the Godling Uttama Thakura in the District of Mymensingh in Eastern Bengal.

## Vol. X, 1930

26. The Cockroach's relatives—A study on comparative storiology.
27. On three recent instances of self-mutilation for propitiating two Goddesses and one God.

## Vol. XI, 1931

28. Some village deities in the neighbourhood of Khurda.
29. Note on a recent instance of folk-belief about foundation-sacrifices from Chotanagpur.
30. Note on a recent instance of exorcism from the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh.

## Vol. XII, 1932

31. Sun-worship in Bengali nursery rhymes.
32. Note on another recent instance of the Khasi custom of offering human sacrifice to the Snake-Deity, Thlen.
33. Note on a rite for propitiating the Tiger-Deity in the district of Mymensingh in Eastern Bengal.

**Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society, Bangalore.**

The following articles appeared in the above journal in  
Vol. XIII to Vol. LIII

1. On some vestiges of the custom of offering Human Sacrifices to Water Deities.
2. Further notes on the custom of offering Human Sacrifices to Water Deities.
3. On a bird myth from the district of Sylhet in Eastern Bengal.
4. On a Bengali accumulative folk-tale of the "The Old Dame Lousy type."
5. On a Santali aetiological folk-tale of the "Mann und Fuchs type."
6. Studies in Bird myths, "On an aetiological myth."
7. Studies in Bird Myths, "On two aetiological myths about the Sky-Lark."
8. Studies in Bird Myths, "On a second aetiological myth about the Indian Cuckoo."
9. Studies in Bird Myths, "On an aetiological myth about the Indian black-headed Oriole."
10. Studies in Bird Myths, "On an aetiological myth about the White-breasted Water-hen and the Moor-hen."
11. Studies in Bird Myths, "On an aetiological myth about the Brahminy Duck."
12. Studies in Bird Myths, "On an aetiological myth about the Brahminy Kite."
13. Studies in Bird Myths, "On an Aetiological Myth about the common Hawk-Cuckoo."
14. Studies in Bird Myths. "On a probable aetiological myth about the Jungle Babbler."
15. Studies in Bird Myths, "On an aetiological myth about the Indian House-Crow."

16. Studies in Bird Myths, "On three aetiological myths about the spots on the Peacock's tail-Feathers."
17. Studies in Bird Myths, "On an aetiological myth about the Indian Koel."
18. Studies in Bird Myths, "On an aetiological myth about the House-Sparrow."
19. Studies in Bird-Myths, "About the White Stork and the Black Stork."
20. Studies in Bird Myths, "On two aetiological myths about the Paddy Bird's long neck and legs."
21. Studies in Bird Myths, "On an aetiological myth about the carrion-feeding habit of the Indian White-Backed Vulture and the smaller white Scavenger Vulture."
22. Studies in Bird Myths, "On an aetiological myth about the Turtle Dove and other species of Doves."
23. Studies in Bird-Myths, "On an aetiological myth about the Brown Fish Owl."
24. Studies in Bird Myths, "On an aetiological myth about the Barn-Owl or the Screech Owl."
25. Studies in Bird Myths, "On an aetiological myth about the Golden-Backed Woodpecker, the Indian Spotted Woodpecker and other species."
26. Studies in Bird Myths, "On a second aetiological myth about the Indian Black-Headed Oriole."
27. Studies in Bird Myths, "On a bird myth from the District of Tippera in Eastern Bengal."
28. Studies in Bird Myths, "On a Lushai-Kuki aetiological myth about the Jungle Babbler."
29. Studies in Bird Myths, "On a Lushai-Kuki aetiological myth about the King-Crow."

30. Studies in Bird Myths, "Further notes on the Bihari myth about the Indian House-Crow."
31. Studies in Bird Myths, "On a south Indian aetiological myth about the Malabar Pied Horn-Bill."
32. Studies in Bird Myths, "On a Lushai-Kuki aetiological myth about the Great Horn-Bill."
33. Studies in Bird Myths, "On an ancient Indian aetiological myth, about the enmity between the Crows and the Owls."
34. Studies in Plant Myths, "On an aetiological myth about the Night-Flowering Jessamine."
35. "On a Birhor aetiological myth about the pinnate leaves of the Tamarind Tree."
36. "On a Birhor aetiological myth about the pinnate leaves of the Wild Date Palm."
37. "On a Birhor aetiological myth about the tenacious vitality of the Jujube Tree."
38. "On a Birhor aetiological myth about the origin of the Sabai Grass."
39. "On an ancient Indian aetiological myth about the periodical leaflessness of the Silk-cotton tree,"
40. "On a Bengali myth about the Betel-Creeper."
41. "On an Angami Naga aetiological myth about the acidity of the tubers of the Taro Plant."
42. "On an ancient Indian aetiological myth about the evolution of the Wild Date Palm and the Date Palm."
43. "On an ancient Indian aetiological myth about the evolution of Tulasi or the sacred Basil Plant."
44. Studies in Plant myths, "On an ancient Indian Aetio-

logical myth about the evolution of wheat and Barley."

45. "On a modern Indian aetiological myth about the evolution of the Tobacco Plant."
46. "On an ancient aetiological myth about the evolution of the Palasa Tree."
47. "On an ancient Indian aetiological myth about the evolution of the sacred Basil or Tulasi Plant, the Pipal or Aswattha Tree, the Palasa and the Amalaki Tree."
48. "On a Bengali aetiological myth about the origin of the husks of the Rice-Grains or the Grains of the Paddy-Plant."
49. "On a Thado Kuki aetiological myth about the origin of the fibrous kernel of the Elephant-Apple or Wood-Apple."
50. "On two Dusan aetiological myths about the evolution of the Coconut Palm, the Sugar-cane, the maize, the bottle-gourd creeper and other plants"
51. "On a South-Sea and Chinese aetiological myth about the Evolution of the Coconut Palm."
52. "On an ancient Indian myth about them etamorphosis of the blades of the Kusa Grass into Siva's Trident."
53. "On a Hungarian myth about the speaking grapes, the smiling apples and the tinkling apricots."
54. "On a Malagasy didactic myth about the rice plant and the sugar-cane."
55. "On a Thado Kuki folk-tale about the metamorphosis of a sorceress into a Plantain-Tree or Banana Tree."
56. "A few Indian myths about the Spanish Jessamine or the Pagoda Tree."

57. Studies in Bird Myths, "On a Sema Naga aetiological myth about the black colour of the Jungle Crow, the Red Colour of the Scarlet Minivet and the Red Chin of the Ruby Throat."
58. "On an Ao Naga aetiological myth about the black colour of the Jungle Crow and the Red Bill and Legs of Green Magpie."
59. "On a Moroccan aetiological myth about the black colour of the Raven."
60. "On an Angami Naga myth about the battle of the birds and the snakes."
61. "On an Ao Naga aetiological myth about the origin of the Cock's crowing before sunrise."
62. Studies in Bird myths, "On a Lohita Naga aetiological myth about the origin of the plaintive call note of the Bengal Green Pigeon."
63. "On a Lhota Naga aetiological myth about the evolution of the common Myna."
64. "On an ancient Indian myth about the battle of the birds and the sea."
65. "The house sparrow and the barn owl in Moroccan magic and leechcraft."
66. "On a Sema Naga aetiological myth about the origin of the Black-Breasted or Rain Quail's habit of not entering the forest."
67. "On a Sema Naga didactic myth about the common Indian Nightjar and the Leopard Cat."
68. "On a Moroccan myth about the King Solomon and the Birds."



69. "On a Roumanian aetiological myth about the evolution of the Cuckoo and the Hoopoe."
70. "On a Hottentot aetiological myth about the origin of the African Heron's Curved Neck."
71. "On a Lohta Naga aetiological myth about the origin of the flat head of the Spotted Owlet, and on the small size of the White-faced Wagtail and of the Hodgson's Pied Wagtail."
72. "A few Moroccan superstitious belief about the Night Heron."
73. Notes on Popular Religion in Bihar.
74. The Ballad of Lurik.
75. "On the Fire-Walking Ceremony of the Dusadha of Bihar."
76. "On Two Sinhalese Accumulative Drolls."
77. "A curious Musalman sect."
78. "The Sambhu Chandi Sect."
79. "Notes on three quaint Indian superstitions."
80. "On an ancient Indian charm for exorcising away noxious animals from fields."
81. Studies in myths, "On a Papuan aetiological myth about the evolution of the Cocconut Palm."
82. "The Pumpkin lore of the Negroes of Jamaica."
83. "Angami Naga and Lhota Naga folk-tale about the metamorphosis of a Semi-divine girl into Orange Fruit."

84. Studies in Plant myths, "A few myths and legends connected with the Kadam Tree."
85. "On a few myths and legend about the Asoka Tree."
86. The African Worship of the Sausage Tree.
87. "On a papuan myth about the battle of the birds and the Ants."
88. "On a Tibetan myth about the outwitting of the crow by a frog."
89. "On a Sema Naga aetiological myth about the origin of the Jungle Crow's habit of pecking the flesh of men."
90. "On the Moroccan folk-beliefs about the Barn-Owl or the Screech-Owl as a bird of ill omen."
91. "On a Roumanian aetiological myth about the origin of the taillessness of the Stork."
92. "On Roumanian aetiological myth about the origin of the European Wood-Pecker's long beak."
93. "Further notes on an Ao Naga aetiological myth about the origin of the Cock's habit of crowing before sunrise."

### ভারতী (Bharati)

১। হিন্দু সমাধিপ্রথা ( ভাদ্র, ১৩০০ সাল )

২। "খুবংক" জাতির বিবরণ ( মাঘ, ১৩১২ সাল )

[ এটি 'জটনৈক প্রবাসী' কর্তৃক লিখিত হইলেও শরৎচন্দ্রের রচনা বলিয়া মনে হয় । ]

\* This bibliography was supplied to the author by Sri Tinkari Mitra, the youngest son of Saratchandra Mitra. The author of this book could not look into and check it in detail. It is quite possible that some errors and omissions have crept in. But since the author intends this book to be a handy reference book facilitating further research, this indulgence is craved from learned readers.



*Folklorists of Bengal*



Born 1866

Dineshchandra Sen

Died 1936



DINESCHANDRA SEN  
(1866—1939)

DEATH is admittedly the absolute truth and consummation of life. But the man who is mortal and whose body is reduced to its elements can live in the hearts of his fellowmen by his noble deeds and contribution to the welfare of mankind. These illustrious men legate substantial something to the people of his native soil which hold them in an eternal glory equally shared by his countrymen. Dineschandra is one who ranks with those renowned men. At the prime of his youth, in his attempt to hunt after Bengali *punthis* (handwritten books, written mainly on palm leaves) in the countryside, he had to face almost baffling odds. With these informative materials, that is the *punthis*, he had built up an edifice of the history of Bengali literature that becomingly elicits reverence and admiration for this great man. He was in one a passionate collector of moth-eaten *punthis*, a critical investigator into folk culture, a virtuoso and a poet. Curiously enough, poetry had been the first passion of his youth.<sup>1</sup> In a few years he was disposed to history—an abstruse aspect of history. On an occasion Dineschandra told Abinaschandra Dasgupta\* the father of his son-in-law, Tamonaschandra Dasgupta, a retired professor of the University of Calcutta, “I aspire to be the greatest poet of Bengal, failing which, the greatest historian.”<sup>2</sup> But the glorious emergence of Rabindranath as the poet paramount convinced him that his first aspiration could not be fulfilled. He retired from poetry and turned to historical litera-

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1. His maiden poem “Jahlad” was published in the magazine “Bharat Suhrid”, edited by Ambikacharan Roy, when Dineschandra was thirteen years of age. A poem “Pujar Kusum” was published in “Bangadarsan” edited by Sanjibchandra Chatterji. His first book of poetry was ‘Kumar Bhupendra Sinha’ (1884) received much appreciation from the reading public. (Sahitya Sadhak Charitamala-90 by Brojendrachandra Bandyopadhyaya, B. S. P., Calcutta).

\* The father of his son-in-law Tamonashchandra Das Gupta, a retired Professor of the University of Calcutta.

2. From his autobiography “Gharer Katha O Yuga Sahitya”.

ture. His career is indeed a clear admission of an unremitting application and concentration which makes a Herculean task possible. He drew upon *punthis*, folk-literature, Sanskrit *Puranas*, *Mangal Kavyas* and carefully made such an elegant fabric of prose literature that he can be called as an originator of Bengali academic prose. Poets profess to play on words and with sense of nicety weigh every word before application. Cogent and appealing these words become. Dineschandra was primarily a poet and his prose works embrace all the poetic virtues. He had his original style, and a theme of melody, harmony and piquancy ran through his composition.

Dineschandra attained an enviable position in course of his life. But he was not all agog for honours. He gave his life to the pursuit of literature. It was to him rather a labour of love. The cream of his intensive research work was rendered into classical literature by his skillful pen. His mighty contribution to literature has been highly appreciated and commended by his countrymen and foreigners alike. Here are some quotations which would speak for the eulogy that were lavished by foreigners on him : "He tells more about the Hindu mind than we can gather from 50 volumes of impressions of travel by Europeans. Loti's picturesque account of Travancore temples, and even M. Chevrillon's synthesis of much browsing on Hindu scriptures seem faint records by the side of this unassuming tale of Hindu Literature."<sup>3</sup> Giving his remarks on a work of D. C. Sen, Sylvain Levi wrote, "I have begun this very look, and I cannot leave it off, I cannot give you praises enough. Your work is a Chintamani, a Ratnakar, full of science and of life, no book about India would I compare with yours. It seems as if I were wandering through your beautiful country and through the heart of your people. Never did I find such a realistic sense of literature. Literary works with you are no dead writing, but living beings, where the spirit of generations breathe freely, widely, embodied for a time in their author, expended afterwards in the multitude of readers and hearers. Pundit and peasant, Yogi and Raja mix

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3. Times Literary Supplement, June 20, 1912. (Quoted from Gharer Katha O-Yuga Sahitya.)

together in a Shakespearian way—should I say too ‘a-la Sudraka’ on the stage you have built up. I am eager to send you my sympathy, nay to express you my admiration.”

“One cannot praise too highly the work of Dr. Sen. A profound original erudition has been associated with vivid imagination—the historian, relying on his document of an epic poet. He had likewise inherited the lyrical genius of his race. His enthusiastic sympathy vibrates through all his pages. The appreciation of life, so rare in our book-knowledge, runs throughout the work. One reads these thousand pages with a sustained interest ; one loses sight of the enormous labour which it presupposes ; one easily steps into the treasure of information which it presents.”<sup>4</sup>

J. D. Anderson who was a friend and admirer of Dineschandra wrote to Taraporveala, “It has always been something of a consolation to me for not having met you in the flesh that often a man’s written style in his letters tells his temperament and character even better than his spoken words, and I am very much mistaken if my unseen friend Dinesh is not one of the kindest and best of man.”<sup>5</sup> Prof. Heinz Mode said, “if Bengali folk-literature is known all over the world as high-light merit within the realm of Indian folk-literature, this knowledge is based on efforts and publication of the great Bengali scholar : Dineschandra Sen.”<sup>6</sup>

### CHILDHOOD :

Dineschandra was born in the house of his maternal uncle in the village of Bagjuri in the district of Dacca (now in East Pakistan ) on 17th of Kartik, 1273 B. S. (3rd November, 1866)\*.

4. French version of Sylvan Levi, April 18, 1912. (Quoted from Gharer Katha O Yuga Sahitya).

5. Ibid. ‘

6. Folklore. Vol. IV, No. 9.

\* The date of birth of Dineschandra is often quoted as 6th November. But in a statement written under his own hand (the facsimile has been printed in “Gharer Katha O Yuga-Sahitya”) his father says, “The birthday of my son and daughter is 17th Kartik, Friday.” This 17th Kartik is 3rd November according to the English Calendar.



And here he got the inspiration for folklore study from his maternal uncle's house. His maternal grandfather was fond of *Yatra* (a kind of folk drama) and other types of folkloristic entertainment. He was also a nice story-teller. It is very interesting to note that the maternal grandfather of Dineschandra was so popular as a story-teller that a memorable *chhada* was composed as under :

*Gani Miar Ghari*

*Nilambarer Bari*

*Gokul Munshir Gope ta*

*Galpa sunbi to Mrityunjay Munshir Kachhe Ja. '*

(The following are remarkable : The clock of the Gani Mia, the ayurvedic pills of Mr. Nilambar, twirling of the moustache of Gokul Munshi and the story-telling of Mrityunjay Munshi)

This Gani Mia was a descendant of the Nawab family while Nilambar was an Ayurvedic physician. Gokul Munshi, the younger brother of Mrityunjay Munshi, his maternal grandfather, was a lawyer.

J. D. Anderson wrote in the 'Asiatic Review,' London, "Dr. Sen's maternal grandfather was a typical Bengali country gentleman, lavish in expenditure on musical plays called *Yatras* and such other amusements, which being performed before the family temple are held to give pleasure to gods as well to mortals. All such dissipations were uncongenial to Sen's father who thought them at once frivolous and irreligious. He was something of an authority on the doctrines of *Samaj* and wrote books on the subject. He also composed hymns and spiritual songs, one of which is roughly translated to the following effect: "My mind, if you would enjoy sight of beautiful dancing, what need is there to frequent gaudily dressed dancing girls? What is more entrancing than the dance of a peacock! What *Baijder's* dance can compare with his splendid attire? And if you love the brilliant midnight, illumination of royal palaces, what can compare with the glorious firmament when the

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৭. গনি মিকার বাড়ি।

নীলম্বরের বাড়ি ॥

গোকুল মুনসীর গোকে তা।

গজ গুনবি তো মুক্তার মুনসীর কাছে বা ॥

moon holds his court among his minister stars ! In costly entertainments a petty question of precedence may cause jealousy and heart-burning. But here the entertainment is open to all, king and cowherd alike."<sup>8</sup> Dineshchandra's father, Iswar-chandra Sen was well-versed in English, Bengali and Persian. Before Dineshchandra was born, he had written in Bengali "Satya Dharmoddipaka Natak", "Brahma-Sangit" and "Dinaj-purer Itihas,"<sup>9</sup> out of which "Satya Dharmaddipak" alone was brought out in part. Iswarchandra was swayed by the reformist movement of Brahmoism. But his consort Rupalata Debi was a conservative Hindu. A great dissention ran high between them over their religious attachments. Her strong stand against her husband's affection for Brahmoism ultimately prevailed upon him.<sup>10</sup>

Dineschandra was one of twins, the other one being his sister. His parents had eleven previous issues all of whom were daughters. Dineschandra was the only son of his parents and so had all the cares and attention lavished on him.

His father died in the month of *Bhadra* (20th August) in 1885. In the following year in the month of *Paush* (16th February) in 1886 his mother left this world. Thereafter, his five elder sisters expired in quick succession. When Dineschandra was a student of Dacca Jagannath College taking his B. A. course, this calamity befell his family. His eldest sister Digbasani Debi had already been widowed and a retainer in their family. The people connected on her husband's side belonged to the Vaishnab sect. As is well known, the preceptors of the Vaishnab sect are noted for their high-flown, ecstatic melodious and devotional poetic composition. These compositions have indeed added to the wealth of Bengali literature. While in

8. Ibid,

9. Sahitya Sadhak Charitmala, No. 90.

10. Rupalata Debi, the mother of Dineschandra was devoted to conservative order of Hinduism. They had bickerings over religious matters, which, however, did not affect their affectionate relation. They were a devoted pair and could not stand separation even for a day (from Life sketch of Iswarchandra Sen by Dr. Chandrasekhar Kali.)

her husband's home, this lady (Digbasani Debi) acquired a deep learning in the Vaishnab and ancient literature. It was from her association that Dineschandra developed a taste for Vaishnab literature and became curious about ancient Bengali literature.

#### **MARRIAGE :**

In 1878 when he was only twelve, he wedded Binodini Debi, daughter of Umanath Sen of Coomilla, then a girl of only seven.

#### **EDUCATION :**

Dineschandra took his primary education in his ancestral village of Sudpur in the district of Dacca. He was then admitted into Manikganj Minor School whose Headmaster Purnachandra Sen was well up in English and by faith a Vaishnab. At the instance of the Headmaster he went through "Vaishnab Padabali" (poetic literature by the Vaishnab preceptors) and an inexhaustible mellifluous literary world was thrown open to him. His another mentor in this sphere was his eldest sister, Digbasani Debi of whom mention has already been made.

Here we like to mention that though Dineschandra was an orthodox Hindu, he had a taste for the Bible. He used to frequent the Church at Dacca. The missionaries wanted to baptise Dineschandra taking advantage of his regard for the Bible. But ultimately the Baptist Mission failed to convert him. As a staunch Hindu, Dineschandra had no affection for any society and religion other than his own. But, subsequently he came in close contact with the Muslims and their religion. He was disposed to write books on the womenfolk of Muslim community, the contribution of Mahommedans to ancient Bengali literature. He grew acquainted with the principles of different religions, and preached Hindu-Muslim unity. Ultimately his religious bias developed into secularism. This is a notable change in his character.

He could not fare well in his student life. But in fulness of time he distinguished himself as a poet, researcher and a man of letters in one and won admiration from his country and abroad. Dineschandra passed the Entrance Examination being placed in the Third Division from the Dacca Jagannath Collegiate School in 1885. He passed the F. A. Examination in the Third

Division and the B. A. Examination with Second Class Honours in English. In which condition he appeared in B. A. has been explained in the next para.

### SERVICE :

Bested with bereavement of his parents and sisters, he was attacked with Rheumatism which made him bed-ridden. This situation stood in the way of his appearing at the B. A. Examination in the appointed year (1887). His economic condition worsened and he had to accept the service of the Headmaster of the Habiganj School in the district of Sylhet on a monthly salary of Rs. 40. During his incumbency as such he appeared at the B. A. Examination in 1889 and came out successful with Second Class Honours in English. After his graduation, he got an appointment as Headmaster in the Comilla Sambhunath Institution on a salary of Rs. 50 per month. This appointment raised his status a little and his pecuniary condition improved to some extent. In 1890 Poet Nabinchandra Sen, the then Deputy Magistrate of Feni Sub-division (Dt. Noakhali, East Pakistan), requested him to take up the post of Headmaster of Feni High School.<sup>11</sup> But for various reasons he could not accede to his request.

In 1891, he left Sambhunath Institution and joined Comilla Victoria School as its Headmaster.<sup>12</sup> Here, in this school, the idea of writing his monumental work "Banga Bhasha O Sahitya" (a history of Bengali literature) dawned upon him. He had then

11. Gharer Katha O Yuga-Sahitya.

12. In 1890 there were two High Schools in Comilla, one of which was a Govt. institution and the other Victoria School run by the public. Some hostile students of Victoria School broke with this school and with some assistance of a non-Bengali merchant, established a separate institution named Sambhunath School. By that time Dineschandra had been a graduate and had made a name for a good teacher. He was invited to accept the post of Headmaster of Sambhunath School, as the condition precedent for recognition of the school stipulated that a man of recognised merit and efficiency must be appointed to take charge of the school. On the other hand, the proprietor of Victoria School with an intention to win him over, requested some of his friends and relatives to meddle and persuade Dineschandra to join his school. Thus pressed, he had to join Victoria School. Consequently, Sambhunath School had to be closed down.

attained the age of 25 and heretofore had lost his parents and some sisters while his surviving sisters had all been married. The bulk of his household that had swarmed with his dear faces was reduced to Dineschandra himself, his wife and a newly-born daughter (later named Makhanbala). His house wore a desolate look. He felt low spirits, which was further depressed by his strained relations with the people of his father-in-law's side. This forlorn picture of his surroundings ultimately turned himself into a recluse. He became averse to social intercourse and work for work's sake became his craze. After his day's work in the school, he used to devote himself to study and composition. It was then he began to write in "Dacca Prakas", "Anusandhan", "Janmabhumi", "Sahitya", and in other journals.

His article "Kalidas O Shakespeare," was published in the magazine "Janmabhumi", (edited by Jogendranath Basu) while his "Janmantarbad" (theory of rebirth) came out in the journal "Anusandhan". He came to be well-known by his name among the distinguished persons of the time for these and other learned articles. His article "Bangabhasha O Sahityer Itihas," (an outline of his book History of Bengali literature) was adjudged to be the best one of those offered for a competition organised by the literary Society of Calcutta. At a function of the Peace Association, Calcutta, he was awarded a medal. This honour gave him stimulus for further research. The function was graced by the contemporary learned and distinguished men who expressed their high appreciation of his profound knowledge in ancient Bengali literature and exhorted him to set to an authoritative work. This exhortation fired his latent desire for such a work, which was further whetted by encouragement of Chandranath Basu, Rajanikanta Gupta and other noted intellectuals of the day. With the zest and fervour of his youth, he went deep into his pursuit. While in the midst of this occupation, he was invited to deliver a lecture on "*Padabali Aloke Chaitanya*," (Chaitanya seen in the light of "Padabalis") at Dacca. On that occasion his analytical exposition of "*Kavikankan Chandi*" was frankly admired by the learned assembly.

## Research

During this time two *punthi*-collectors could be seen gleaning *punthis* from far and near. The one was Pandit Haraprasad Shastri, collector of Sanskrit *punthis* and the other Dineschandra Sen, collector of Bengali *punthis*. From village to village Dineschandra used to move hunting *punthis*. On an information from anybody he would literally run to the spot where those could be available. It was not unoften that some wrong information spurred him to a place only to disappoint. He had the fever for *punthi* like gold fever and would go through fire and water when a *punthi* was, so to speak, to be salvaged. Attired in the garb of a Vaishnab, he would identify himself and come to be homely with them. It would then be easy for him to learn the rare specimen of "Vaishnab Padabali", which they were shy of teaching to anybody other than a Vaishnab. He feasted his eyes on rustic life. His roving eyes scanned now the brisk maiden at work in granary, then the housewife feeding her oven with firewood while the copious smoke given off causing tears rolling down her cheeks, then the simple nagging child catching hold of the fringe of "Dhuti" or "Sari" of the grandpapa or grandmama, then the bullocks ploughing the field leaving fine furrows in the trail. His poetic instinct turned these common sights of countryside to his profit. He would pick up at once what oral literature fell from their lips—folksongs, doggerels, folktales, etc. He also would make vignettes of their manners and customs, beliefs and ideas, rituals and so on. In his wanderings from place to place collecting materials, sumptuous and delicate dishes were far from his reach and he had to content himself with snacks of "*Dahi*" and "*Chida*" (curd and flattened rice) or some bites of fruit. On occasions he had to go without having a morsel of food. In his long tramp when he felt much run down, he had, having no other shelter near-by, to sprawl under a tree on a stretch of grass. A little rest and away he went. His toils were rewarded. He unearthed a host of *punthis*, for example, "*Paragali Mahabharat*" by Kabindra Parameswara, "*Aswamedh Jajna*" of Chhuti Khan, by Srikar Nandy, "*Manashadebir Bhasan*" by Chandrabati, "*Padmabat*" by Alaul,

"Mahabharat" retold by Sanjay.<sup>13</sup> These collections were made along with Benodebehari Kavyatirtha of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. We learn that nearly three hundred *punthis* were later purchased from him by the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta. Though East Bengal, now Eastern Pakistan, his home-land, was the main centre of his research, he extended his activities to West Bengal too, from where he discovered a considerable number of *punthis* with the help of his associates. In the Preface to his work "Bangabhasha O Sahitya" (first edition) mention has been made of Haradhan Dutta of Badarganj in the district of Hooghly and Achyut Tattwanidhi of Sylhet who respectively helped him to trace out the autobiography of *Krittibas* and the *Karacha* of *Govindadas*.

His health decayed under the pressure of double role of a Headmaster on whom hinges administration of a school and a researcher whose task is usually arduous. The result was that he was affected with acute brain-fag (6th November, 1896). He underwent long medical treatment but to no effect. After six months of treatment in vain, he was brought down to Calcutta so that he may take advantage of the best physicians. He had his sojourn in Calcutta for two years at a stretch till 1898 when a great plague broke out in the city. Dineschandra thought it wise to leave Calcutta and go under the care of his brother-in-law (sister's husband) who lived at Faridpur (East Pakistan).

Before he was down with Rheumatism, his work "Bangabhasha O Sahitya", Vol. I, (the History of Bengali literature before the English period) was published with the financial assistance of the then ruler of Tripura State, Birchandra Manikya (1896). Prior to this he wrote *Bekha* (collection of essays—1895) besides the book of poetry previously mentioned.

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13. Here we must mention the name of Abdul Karim Sahitya Bisharad who collected hundreds of Bengali *punthis* and did most useful service in the field of ancient, mediaeval and folk literature. We wish to describe Sahitya Bisharad's activities treating his life and work in the Second volume of this book.

Now things had been at their worst for Dineschandra when Sir Grierson advised him to apply to the Government for a grant-in-aid. He applied for the same. After careful consideration the then British Government decided to give him a monthly grant of Rs. 25 considering his research work on Bengali language. It was from Faridpur that the tide of his life took a turn. In the last part of the nineteenth century he came back to Calcutta. In 1901, with the publication of the second edition of his "Bangabhasha O Sahitya" he was greeted with dithyrambs from all quarters. Now he was held much dear. Distinguished men of charitable disposition came forward with their pecuniary resources which helped him out of his protracted illness. Even during his illness also he did not put aside his pen. Even then, contribution to various journals and books would fetch him an income ranging from Rs. 150 to Rs. 200 per month.<sup>14</sup>

It was from the year 1900 that he was relieved of privation and hardships and from 1901 till his death he had been leading a life of easy circumstances (39 years). In addition to the aforesaid government grant, he used to receive a life-long scholarship of Rs. 25 awarded by Radhakisore Manikya, Maharaja of Tripura. Those who came to his succour in his rainy days were Saratkumar Roy (Kumar of Dighapatia), Maharaja Manindra Chandra Nandy, Gaganendranath Tagore, Samarendranath Tagore, Abanindranath Tagore, Birchandra Manikya (Maharaja of Tripura), Radhakisore Manikya (successor of Birchandra Manikya), Maharaja of Mayurbhanj, Sir Grierson, Sir John Woodburn and others. There was a time when arts-crafts, literature, music and dance received unstinted patronage from the hands of landed aristocracy and the traditionally wealthy persons. But, as the old order of things gives place to new order, the landed aristocracy is now destined to go and has almost faded away. In India in its place has sprung up the bourgeois

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14. During these period Dineshchandra used to travel with Kalishankar Sen, Deputy Magistrate, father of Professor Tripurasankar Sen, when he was out for his official work. Kalishankar liked Dineshchandra the most. Prof. Tripurashankar Sen supplied this information to the author.



aristocracy—the business magnates, industrialists and other profiteers who are not so mindful for art, culture or literature as the Rajas, Maharajas and Zamindars were. So now-a-days the main patronage of art and culture has now been rested on the Government. We may logically count upon this fresh blood admitted into the higher order of our society to follow the tradition left behind by the former, namely, fosterage of literature, music, arts and crafts. But it is unfortunate to note that seldom they take interest in the development of art and culture, unless their selfish end is not satisfied.

Now, Dineschandra befriended many of his contemporary intellectuals of Bengal, who very often used to call at his residence. They were Nagendranath Basu, Haraprasad Sastri, Ramendrasundar Trivedi, Hirendranath Datta, Akshaykumar Baral, Dwijendralal Roy, Jaladhar Sen, Kedarnath Majumdar, Bijayratna Sen, Dr. Nilratan Sarkar, Dwarakanath Sen, Rabindranath Tagore, Sarala Debi, Abanindranath Tagore and many others. He was also encouraged and greeted by such men of letters as Romain Rolland, Maurice Maeterlinck, Sylvain Levy, George Grierson. In later days his "Eastern Bengal Ballads" was criticised by many as unauthentic and at the same time the discovery of the ballads was surprising and highly welcomed by many.\*

#### Career

1902 was the promising year which turned the scale of his life. A learned well-wisher of Dineschandra, Rajanikanta Gupta, who was an examiner in Bengali for the B.A. course of the Calcutta University died in 1900. Dineschandra applied for the post left vacant by his death. It is to be noted here that M.A. course in Bengali was not introduced till then. Sir Asutosh Mukherjee,\*\* one of the greatest educationists of India, then piloted the activities of Calcutta University. He was wise

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\* Interested readers are advised to read 'Bengali folk-ballads of Mymensingh and the problem of their authenticity' by Dr. Dusan Zbavitel published by the University of Calcutta. •

\*\* See Folklore, Vol. V, No. 6, (June 1964) pp. 235-238 where an informative article on Sir Asutosh appeared.

enough to offer him the post. It was from 1902 that his sunny days began and his course of life took a decisive turn. By stages he came to be the Reader when Sir Asutosh asked him to make an original contribution in English on Bengali Language and Literature, which he did most creditably. His work "History of Bengali Literature" was published in 1911.

Dineschandra was appointed Ramtanu Lahiri Professor and elected a Fellow of the Senate of the Calcutta University in 1913. He interceded with Sir Ashutosh for raising the study of Bengali to M.A. standard. But his intercession was of no avail until at last in 1919 when Sir Asutosh all on a sudden called him and said, "I have decided to introduce M.A. course in Bengali. Please have the goodness to write to Anderson in England for selection of text-books and syllabus of study spread over eight papers, on receipt of which we shall do the needful."<sup>15</sup> Dineschandra was elated at this and was glad to see his proposal accepted at long last. He enquired, "So long you have ignored my proposal. But what makes you decide in my favour"?<sup>16</sup> Sir Asutosh replied, "M. A. Examination shall not be confined to Bengali vernacular alone. I have a mind to extend it to other provincial languages. But the thing is that our Bengali language has still to get sufficient footing to be universally recognised. The condition precedent is that there must be works in *English* on history of its literature, its *linguistics* and so forth. I have had you working at those subjects. The groundwork is almost complete. The time is ripe for giving effect to the proposal."<sup>17</sup>

This is a picture of one side, it has its obverse side too. The gradual success of Dineschandra was an eye-sore to some people who formed unofficial anti-Sen group. Some of these people called Sen an upstart. Some remarked, Sir Asutosh was "casting pearls before swine." Much more rash criticism from

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15. Gharer Kātha O Yuga Sahitya.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

the press as also from the educator-politicians he heard. He enjoyed both censure and recompense at the same time. How strong was the feeling of anti-Sen group has been proved by the success of the leaders of the forties-fifties of the University of Calcutta in nearly washing out his influence from the curriculum of University education.

Dineschandra held the post of of Ramtanu Lahiri Professor for twenty long years (1913—1932).

#### Honour

In 1921, the Calcutta University conferred on him honorary degree of D. Litt. In the same year Acharyya Brajendranath Sil, Abanindranath Tagore, the Prince of Wales, Sylvain Levi were honoured with Doctorate Degrees by the said University. In same year the Government awarded him the title of "Rai Bahadur". He received "Jagattarini Medal" from the Calcutta University in 1931. During this period he was flowing with honours and titles. He was awarded titles of "Puratattwa Bisarad" and "Kabisekhar" respectively by *Bharat Maha Mandali* and *Nabadwip Bidwat Mandali*. He had the honour of being elected General President of Bangiya Sahitya Sammelan (1929) and the President of Literary Branch of Prabasi Banga Sahitya Sammelan.

#### Conclusion

The greatest literary contribution of Dineshchandra is his compilation of *Mymensingh Gitika*, later *Purbabanga Gitika* (East Bengal ballads in 4+4 volumes). This was published simultaneously with its English version compiled by Dr. Sen with notes and introduction. Lord Ronaldshay, the then Governor of Bengal, wrote its Preface. The *Gitikas* (ballads) in most cases were culled by Chandrakumar De while in some cases by Asutosh Choudhury, Biharilal Chakrabarti and others. Dineshchandra scented these *Gitikas* through an article of Chandrakumar published in the journal "Saurav". Thus Chandrakumar came to his notice and Dineshchandra decided upon compiling in a volume the materials furnished by Chandrakumar. Dr. Sen placed his scheme before Sir Asutosh. This all-powerful discerning man of the Calcutta University was

convinced of his ability and under his patronage he ventured upon that undertaking. Sir Asutosh was noted for his learning, constructive genius, towering personality and dauntless spirit, which won for him the epithet of the "Bengal Tiger". Now the days were dismal for the University. The Government had stopped grants to the University following dissensions over University administration. Sir Asutosh would not allow measures to undermine autonomy of the University. This attitude of the Government threatened a collapse of University. But the indomitable Sir Asutosh took his courage in both hands and tried to raise University funds from private sources. Even in such a financial stringency, Sir Asutosh did not fail to encourage the collector of the folklore of Bengal and give all possible help to Dineshchandra and his colleagues. The result was that materials came pouring in. He approached the then Governor of Bengal, Lord Lytton, for subvention towards the cost of its production. It was arranged that half the cost would be met by the Government and half by the University. This work was greeted with showers of admiration from India and abroad. Some selected "*Gitikas*" were even translated into French by Madelline Rolland, sister of the famous French writer Romain Rolland. From French they were again rendered into Swedish. Recently Dusan Zbavitel of Prague has most creditably translated some *Gitikas* from original text into Czech language and it is very much interesting to note that in 1961 Banhikumari Chakravarty (now Bhattacharjee), an enthusiastic young scholar, has been awarded D. Phil for her research on "The Folk ballads of Bengal" from the University of Calcutta. In 1962 Dr. Dusan Zbavitel's "Bengal Folk ballads and the problem of their authenticity" was published by the University of Calcutta.

Dineshchandra has made a comprehensive survey of folk literature of Bengal, the tangible result of which was his "Folk Literature of Bengal". This work brought folk literature of Bengal within the knowledge of all people of this country and outside because of its English medium. His name was carried far abroad by \**East Bengal Ballads* about which mention has already been made.

Dineschandra would give the world for the promotion of folk literature of Bengal. He was a man to be called a veritable sage. In later years, following in his trail many a writer has established himself in life. According to Mode again "he has pointed out three fundamental interconnection of worldwide folklore, and Bengal's part in it; the special quality of Bengal folklore, the victory of justice being strongly supported by the unshakable moral of the heroines; and third, the critical estimation of the folktale versions, pointing to the outstanding merit of Dakshinaranjan Mitra-Majumdar publications. The research of comparative folklore has been initiated with the publication of the German Indologist—Theodor Benfey's *Panchatantra*, Leipzig, 1859. Even since it has been known that many of the folktales spread over the world, have originated or at least been largely influenced Indian folktales."<sup>18</sup>

Any student of the History of Bengal knows it well that obscure was the social setting of Bengal in the 4th and 5th centuries. A rough-cast of the cultural life of Bengal could be traced in the 6th century when our cultural forms began to take a definite shape. *Punthis* came into use as the most convenient receptacle of our knowledge. From that time on innumerable *punthis* mostly of palm leaves and scarcely of paper were turned out. Most of the *punthis* were in course of time went round to laymen who were ignorant of their intrinsic value and kept them shelved and uncared for. Thus the *punthis* were allowed to rot and be eaten by moths. When in this way they were about to be destroyed, Dineschandra and some others discovered them. The records of our culture, literature and ways of our life of bygone days were pent up in those *punthis*. The stages he had to go from beginning to end to carry through his mission, are something like the labours of Hercules. To discover and edit those *punthis* with introduction and notes, to wander about and collect the folksongs from the lips of unlettered country folks, to move from door to door, to raise funds to meet the cost of his investigation, to pick up fit field-workers, to dress the materials collected into a readable form and to translate them into English—these are

the keys to his success and eminence. Now these *punthis* and *Gitikas* (ballads) came to be the essential materials for reference for Indologists all over the world.

It may be mentioned here that Dineschandra was intimate with Rabindranath. It was Rabindranath who wrote a Preface to his "Ramayani Katha". It is noteworthy that in 1343 B.S. when Rabindranath was at Mongpu he sent a message of hearty congratulation on his execution of such a remarkable work like "Mymensingh Gitika".<sup>19</sup> Dr. Sen had friendly terms with Dakshinaranjan Mitra-Majumdar, another exponent of folk-literature of Bengal. Dakshinaranjan owed much of his inspiration to Dineschandra. There was a close intimacy between Dineschandra and Gurusaday Dutt who was well-versed and researcher in folk-art and dance. Gurusaday Dutt went on a tour through western countries propagating and popularising folk dances of Bengal. On his return home, he was given a reception in the University Institute, Calcutta, at a meeting presided over by Dr. Shyamaprosad Mukherjee, the youngest son of Sir Asutosh. Dineschandra was one among the distinguished persons of that meeting. He offered himself to be admitted to the order of "Bratachari".<sup>20</sup> He always took active part in any function calculated to promote folk culture of Bengal.

We wish to point out another remarkable effort of Dr. Sen besides his endeavour to focuss the attention of the city people on folk-art and craft materials and traditional folk-songs. He once tried to establish an institution where folk-songs could be learnt. His huge collection of folk-art and craft materials were presented to the Maharaja of Tripura, considering the generosity of the Maharaja, when he paid a visit to Dr. Sen's residence at Behala, Calcutta. The Maharaja gave Dr. Sen to understand that he would like to open a folk-art and craft museum in his State. But on the sudden demise of the then Maharaja, the public museum could not come into existence. The remaining materials on folk-arts and crafts were presented to the Asutosh Museum of the University of Calcutta in pursuance of the desire of Dr. Sen,

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19. The facsimile of this letter is reproduced in *Banglar Puranari*, 1939.

20. *Dineshchandr'er Sankhipta Jibani* in *Banglar Sakti*, 1939.

which formed a nucleus for the study of folk-art and craft in Bengal.

He left this world at the age of 73. His wife Benodini Debi died when he was 58, on 26th December, 1936.<sup>21</sup> The ideal pair lived together for long 58 years. It was the day when Dineshchandra was away to Ranchi to preside over "Banga Sahitya Sammelan", his wife expired. He, however, did not long survive his wife, his constant companion. After an interval of three years, he died in 1939 in his house to which he gave the name "Rupeswar" at Behala, a south-end suburb of Calcutta. He left behind 6 sons and 4 daughters. All his sons, daughters, grandsons, grand-daughters are well placed in life. He was intimate with pen and ink till the last day of his life. We have lost in him a pioneer folklorist of Bengal.

### BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Here is a list of works exclusive to Dineshchandra as also works he had done in collaboration with others. First of all let us catalogue his works in Bengali language :—

- 1884 *Kumar Bhupendra Singha* (poems)
- 1895 *Rekha* (collection of essays)
- 1896 *Bangabhasa O Sahitya* (literary essay) First published from Coomilla, Chaitanya Press, East Pakistan.
- 1902 *Sukatha* (collection of essays)
- 1904 *Tin Bandhu* (fiction)
- 1907 *Behula* (text book—mythological tale)
- 1907 *Phullara* (mythological tale)
- 1913 *Dhara Drone O Kushadwaj* (mythological tale)
- 1914 *Banga Sahitya Parichay* (selection of Bengali literature from ancient time to the middle of the nineteenth century)

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21. It is to be noted that on the death of his father (Ishwarchandra Sen) his mother followed him in six months. Similarly, Dineschandra died in three years after the death of his wife. So none of the bereaved had to bear the pangs of separation from the respective partner in life.

- 1916 *Grihashri* (didactic treatise on home science)
- 1918 *Samrat O Samart Mahishir Bharat Paridarshan* (Illustrated Bengali translation of the Souvenir book published by the Government of India commemorating the visit of the King-Emperor and Queen-Empress to India in 1911).
- 1918 *Nil Manik* (a work depicting country life).
- 1920 *Sanjher bhog* (full story).
- 1920 *Mukta Churi* (legendary tale).
- 1920 *Rakhalar Rajgi* (legendary tale).
- 1920 *Ragranga* (legendary tale).
- 1920 *Gaye Halud* (written for married ladies).
- 1920 *Baisakhi* (juvenile story).
- 1922 *Subal Sakhar Kanda* (Vaishnav folk-story for the Juveniles).
- 1922 *Saral Banglar Sahitya* (specimen of simple literary pieces).
- 1922 *Gharer Katha O Juga Sahitya* (autobiography).
- 1922 *Baidic Bharat* (India of the Vedic age).
- 1922 *Bhay Bhanga* (story).
- 1924 *Deshmangal* (stories).
- 1925 *Aloke Andhare* (fiction).
- 1925 *Kanuparibad O Shyamoli Kunja* (mythological tales).
- 1926 *Chakurir Birambana* (fiction).
- 1926 *Patimandir* (fiction).
- 1927 *Oparer Alo* (fiction).
- 1929 *Mamudir sibmandir* (essay).
- 1935 *Brihat Banga* (Bengal from earliest time to Palasi i. e. 1757).
- 1952 *Mymensingh Gitika* (Ballads of Mymensingh).

The following are the works that were edited by him conjointly :—

1912 *Kashiram Dasi Mahabharat*; 1914 *Banga Sahitya Parichay* (typical selection from the Bengali literature from the earliest times to middle of 19th century); 1916 *Krittibasi Ramayan*; 1933 and 1934 *Gopichandrer Gan* (Folksongs collected by Bisweswar Bhattacharyya in North Bengal, Edited by Dineschandra Sen in collaboration with Basantaranjan Roy in 2 Vols.; 1923, 1926, 1930, 1932 *Mymensingh Gitika* (folk



ballads mainly collected by Chandrakumar De, Asutosh Chaudhury, Biharilal Chakravorty & edited by Dineschandra Sen, Vol. I, II, III and IV); 1928 *Kavikankan Chandi* (Editors—Dineschandra Sen, Charuchandra Bandyopadhyay and Hrishikes Basu in 2 Vols.); 1928 *Gobinda Daser Karcha* (edited by Dineschandra Sen and Banwarilal Goswami); 1928 *Hari Lila* (Lala Jaynarayan Sen, Dineschandra Sen and Basantaranjan Ray); 1928 *Krishnakamal Granthabali*; 1930 *Vaishnab Padabali* (Edited by Dineschandra Sen and Khagendranath Mitra).

The following are books in English :—

1911. History of Bengali Language and Literature.

1912. *Sati* (a mythological story translated from the original Bengali by the author with *introduction* by J. D. Anderson.

1917. The Vaishnava Literature of Medieval Bengal.

1917. Chaitanya and his companies, lecture delivered as R. L. Ghosh fellowship.

1920. The Folk Literature of Bengal.

1920. The Bengali Ramayana.

Let us stop here for a moment. His “Bengali Ramayana” is an original work in which the author discussed the distinguishing feature between Valmiki Ramayana and others’ and incorporated matters from original sources that lacked in Krittibasi Ramayana. It is a work of independent thinking and profound scholarship.

1921. Bengali Prose Style (Ramtanu Lahiri fellowship lecture).

1922. Chaitanya and his Age.

1923. 1926, 1928, 1932 Eastern Bengal Ballads of Mymensingh. Vols. 1, 2, 3 and 4. It consist of 58 ballads and appeared in 4 vols. in 8 chapters.

1925. Glimpses of Bengal Life.

It should be noted in this connection that Sir Asutosh once remarked that the University press was getting tired with the printing of works by Dineschandra Sen alone.

After his retirement from the University service he did the following works :—

- 1934. *Pauraniki* (a collection of seven short stories) ;
- 1935. *Brihat Banga* (historical survey of Bengal from ancient times to the time of battle of Plassey), Vol. I. 1935; Vol. II.
- 1936. *Asutosh-Smriti Katha* (Memoirs about Sir Asutosh).
- 1937. *Padabali Madhurya* (about the aesthetics of Padabali).
- 1938. *Syamal O Kajjal* (historical fiction).
- 1939. *Puratani* (a depiction of characters of distinguished Muslim ladies).
- 1939). *Banglar Purnanari* (stories depicting characters of traditional Bengali womenfolk gathered from the book 'Eastern Bengal Ballads', dedicated to Rabindranath Tagore.

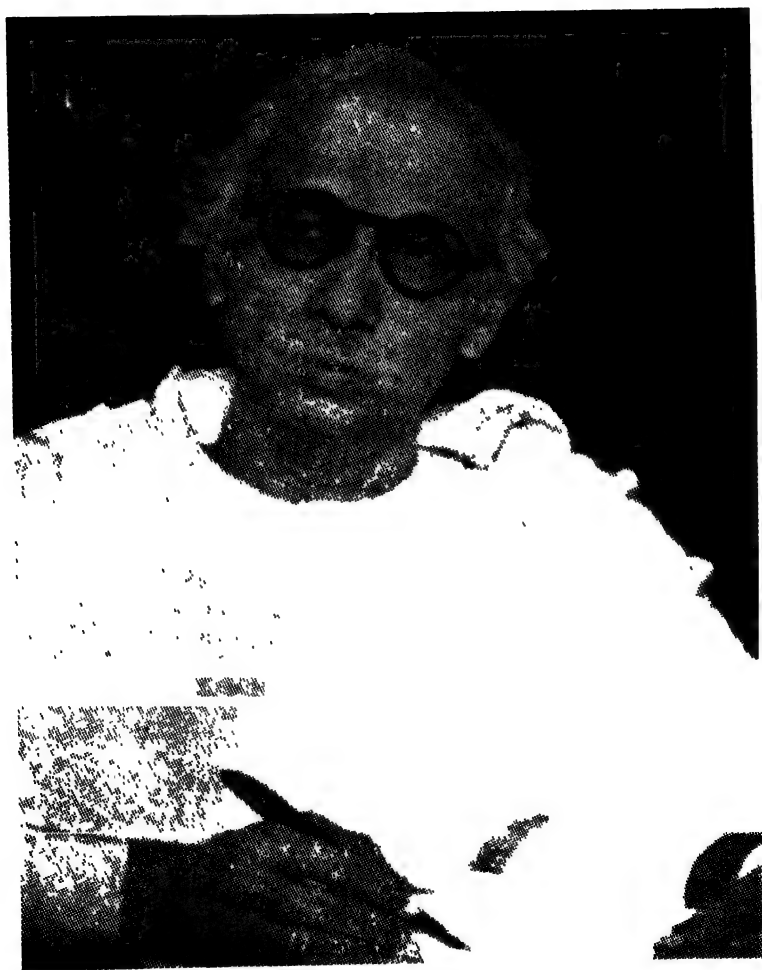
*Prachin Bangla Sahitye Musalmanar Abadan* (Contribution of Mohomendan writers to ancient Bengali literature).

It would be an omission if we fail to mention that Dinesh-chandra helped Rabindranath and Sarala Debi in some way or other in conducting "Bangadarshan" and "Bharati". He had been for a brief period editor of the monthly magazines "Bangabani" and "Baidya Hitaisini". He was a regular contributor to (i) Dacca Prakash (ii) Anusandhan (iii) Janmabhumi (iv) Sahitya (v) Bangiya Sahitya Parishat Patrika (vi) Banga Darshan (vii) Bharati (viii) Bangabani (ix) Calcutta Review (x) Baidya Hitaisani and in other periodicals.

Almost all of his essays appeared in book form, so we did not try to make a list of his essays published in different journals. Dr. B.C. Sen, son of Dr. D.C. Sen said that an original manuscript of his father was handed to Sri R. P. Mukherjee which is not traceable now. It is expected that the recently formed Dineschadran Sen Birth Centenary Committee (1963) will be able to gather more facts about Dr. Sen before his birth centenary celebrations comes off in the year 1966. The present book is not a thesis nor is it an outcome of a research project. It is a primary work which will encourage further research and this idea has been maintained all through.



*Folklorists of Bengal*



Born 1877

**Dakshinaranjan Mitra-Majumdar**

Died 1957



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DAKSHINARANJAN MITRA-MAJUMDAR  
(1877—1957)

NINETEENTH Century Bengal saw several creative geniuses weaving their tales and verses for children, each in his own way. No question of influence or mutual dependence does actually arise in respect of their inspiration or imagination, for the rich ancient lore of Bengal was just waiting by their side, an inexhaustible source. These creative geniuses drew upon a common source and vitalised them to the best of their ability. Dakshinaranjan Mitra-Majumder is a most outstanding name in the field of the folk culture of Bengal. He was, so to speak, a Napoleon of Bengal's folk literature—a distinguished exponent of its characteristic spirit. With an euphony of diction representing the ethos of ancient people of Bengal, he put into writing juvenile oral stories, romantic and droll, that were told and retold to children by their grandfather or grandmother at night-fall. Dakshinaranjan was the man to break the ice in this sphere of Bengali literature and introduced folk style of writing. He plodded on as a pioneer. A few tried to follow him closely but most of them have stopped short. It is noted with regret that even those who now take pains to work in the field of folklore seldom take care to recognise him except by passing reference when necessary. As he could not leave behind any coterie or school of thought or tradition he has simply been kept marked as an author of juvenile literature which he reclaimed from oral traditions of the village folk, so long left uncared for and unnoticed by the educated townsfolk. He picked up and arranged the pieces in a presentable under the categories of "Kupkatha", "Bratakhatha" and "Rasakatha."

### Childhood

Dakshinaranjan was born in April 1877 (2nd Baisakh, 1284 B. S.) in the famous Mitra-Majumdar lineage of Chandradwip of Bakla Sub-Division of the District Bakarganj (Barisal). His birthplace was the village of Ulail off Savar in the district of Dacca (now in Pakistan). This Mitra-Majumder family can trace its ancestry to King Udaynarayan who was son-in-law of the patriotic and gallant king Pratapaditya, who fought so well against the Mughal Emperor. Udaynarayan, a man of valour and patriotic spirit, was a fitting ally to Pratapaditya,

Late Ramadaranjan Mitra-Majumdar, the father of Dakshinaranjan, married Kusumamayee Debi of well-known Guha-Roy family of Jessore. In 1293 B. S. (1885 A. D.) when Dakshinaranjan was a boy of nine, his mother passed away when she was of 30 years only. He was the eldest son of theirs. In his boyhood he was naughty and frolicsome. His father was a Sanskrit scholar and interested himself more in study than in wordly affairs. As a result, care of the boy devolved on his aunt Late Rajlakshmi Chaudhurani (sister of the father). This widowed lady had no issue and lived in the village of Dighapatia of Tangail Sub-Division in the District of Mymensingh (Eastern Pakistan). Dakshinaranjan had been in her company for about twenty-five years. But even before his teens his fancy was enlivened by the folktales of Bengal narrated by his aunt (father's sister). This lady was thoroughly imbued with indigenous lore. So her influence is manifest in the style, diction and idioms used by Dakshinaranjan in his juvenile literature. He was caught up with her spirit and made up his mind to collect and edit and publish those lores. Ramadaranjan died at the age of 66 in 1912.

### Education

Dakshinaranjan was first admitted to Class VII at Dacca Jagannath Collegiate School in 1893 when he was 16 years old. He has been in this school for 3 years and then got admitted in Santosh Jahnabi High School where he studied for 2 years. He accompanied his father who came to settle at Murshidabad

(West Bengal) in 1887. He passed the Entrance Examination in 1898. For higher studies he got himself admitted to Krishnath College of Berhampore, Murshidabad (West Bengal)<sup>1</sup> but could not complete his F. A. course. On the demise of his father his academic career came to an end. Though from the point of view of University education he had no degree to his credit, he learned many a thing on his own initiative.

#### Career

Dakshinaranjan's poetic genius began to manifest itself in the early years of his boyhood when he first entered the field of literature by composing a poem entitled "*Prakriti*", which was published in 1890 when he was a boy of thirteen.<sup>2</sup> Since then his compositions continued to be published in different journals. Thereafter he presented his writings, one after another, through the medium of different periodicals.

During his stay at Murshidabad, the last capital of independent Muslim rulers of Bengal, he brought out a journal named "*Sudha*" in 1308 B. S. (1901) with the financial aid from his father. In this journal Dakshinaranjan published a scheme of Bengali Literary Congress which became the talk of the day and is materialised in the organization 'Banga Sahitya Sammelan' (Bengali Literary Congress). The magazine had almost regular issues for four consecutive years and was neatly printed from Brahmo Mission Press at Calcutta. For the purpose of printing the magazine he had often to come down to Calcutta. On the death of his father, he went back to the affectionate fold of his aunt, Rajlakshmi Chaudhurani. He was thirty five years of age when he lost his father. His mother died when he was a mere boy.

His book of poem "*Utthan*" (in blank verse)

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1. "Indian Folklore", January-March 1958 p. 1-2.

2. "Desh", Calcutta, Volume 29, No. 24. p. 979.



saw the light of the day in 1902. In this prime of his youth, bereft of his parents, he betook himself to the charge of looking after his widowed aunt and also her estate. His managerial function often drew him far into the remote countryside and his continual visit made him intimate with country life. Ultimately he developed a fondness for rural culture and folk ways of life. Incidentally it may be mentioned that such was the case with Gurudeva Rabindranath.<sup>3</sup> It can be proved by factual and circumstantial evidence that unless Rabindranath had a chance of putting up on the sandy beach and on the bosom of the river "Padma" and of having direct communion with village folk of Shilaidah and Potisar, he would not have evinced so much interest in the welfare of rural area and its people. He rather identified himself with the spirit of village life. (Rabindranath expressed his sense of attachment to countryside and solicitude for its upliftment at a social gathering held long before at Pabna, in North Bengal. Rabindranath's itineration in a boat from place to place had led to discovery of Lalan Fakir, Gagan Harkara and others. This Lalan Sadhu, a religious mendicant, was a true representative of country-bred spiritual philosophy, whose "Baul" music and composition in country dialect influenced Rabindranath to a great extent.<sup>4</sup>)

Like Rabindranath, Dakshinaranjan had sensitive mind, conscious of country's potential wealth of culture. He used to move in a barge from place to place in his round of inspection. One day he heard a soul-stirring rustic melody which enchanted him. He enquired about the singer and found him to be one of his tenants. He warmly welcomed him to his office (*Kachari*) to hear a recital of his songs. He rewarded him bountifully on his performance. He noted down the wordings of the "*Rupkatha*" (fanciful artistic stories composed in rustic vein and dialect), told by his aunt and the wealth of ballads sung by poor village singers. They

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3. See Rabindranath Tagore article No 2. of this book.

4. The University of Calcutta has published the songs of Lalan as 'Lalan Gitika' edited by Dr. Motilal Das and Dr. P. K. Mahapatra.

gave him relish more and more. Until then he had a taste for lyrical poetry and sophisticated compositions. He turned his thought from them and directed his attention to the oral literature of Bengal and vigorously set about collecting and preserving them as far as possible in its original form.

Let us remember in this connection that through western education, this country was then becoming Europeanized in thoughts and manners<sup>5</sup> when at the same time the spirit of independence was drawing in the heart of the country folk. The result of this was the foundation of the National Congress.<sup>6</sup> But the nation-building work of the Congress proceeded slowly. As till then the unsophisticated country folk was beyond their consideration. Dakshinaranjan did not fail to see this fact and he engaged himself in the services of the country, specially of the province of Bengal, by placing before the countrymen the line of literature which is truly their own and which can make them feel their country in their heart and help them to proceed to independence in proper channel. Thus his volumes of "*Bangalar Katha-sahitya*" (Folk literature of Bengal) came out of his serious efforts of years.

In Calcutta

When he was 29 (1906) he came over to Calcutta with a store of folkloristic materials at his disposal. It was a time when political movement in Calcutta was in full swing. Movement against partition of Bengal, "Swadeshi" movement (a movement to encourage use of indigenous commodities and at the same time discourage use of foreign goods) were the order of the day. Even Rabindranath was caught up with the spirit and he came to hold the front of the movement.<sup>7</sup> At that time Dakshinaranjan was intro-

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5. আমরা বিলিতি ধরনে হাসি করাসী ধরনে কাশি —( বিজ্ঞানলাল )

6. Mr. Hume established the Congress in 1885 which has been the ruling party in India since independence.

7. বাংলার ঝাটি বাংলার জল —( রবীন্দ্রনাথ )

duced by Dineshchandra Sen with Swarnakumari Devi, sister of Rabindranath, who was editor of "Bharati", a journal of the Tagore family. He gave her the manuscript of the story of "Pusparamala" for her persual. She was very glad to go through it and readily selected it for publication in "Bharati."

Dineshchandra Sen, a scholar and professor of Bengali literature, was so much impressed with his native style and diction of tales that, of his own accord, he called on him at his residence at Banamali Sarkar Street, Calcutta to pick up an acquaintance and exchange views with him. A world of wonders awaited Dr. Sen when he went through the collections of Dakshinaranjan. He mentioned that those tales fraught with socio-cultural substance of Bengal should be made public. With this end in view he also introduced Dakshinaranjan to the Publisher—Bhattacharyya & Sons,—who first undertook the publication of "*Thakurmar Jhuli*." This is a book of folk literature which has been highly prized since its appearance. It was by the good offices of Dineshchandra that a preamble to this book was written by Rabindranath Tagore. Thereafter Dakshinaranjan's works were brought out in series.

As has been told previously, in course of long association with his aunt Dakshinaranjan picked up acquaintance with different types of folk people. While he learned "*Bratakatha*" and "*Gitikatha*" from his aunt who patronized him in his compilation of folklore, he happened to collect the popular story "*Malanchamala*" from some Buddhist nun, who was then 80 years old and had faulty articulation. He contrived to record her inarticulate words with a phonograph and took pains to decipher and finish them. He secured 75% of the story from this old lady and the rest 25% he added from his imagination to give it a shape of a fully developed story. In the first edition of "*Thakurmar Jhuli*" he made use of the diction of the nun. But Akshaykumar Sarkar, editor of "*Sadharanj*", and some others requested him to do well to expunge the archaic unintelligible vocabulary for the general readers. So we notice an

amendment in the language of "*Thakurmar Jhuli*" (old grandmother's tale) from its second edition which is still current.<sup>8</sup>

The book was reviewed in "The Bande Mataram" which was then edited by Aravinda Ghosh<sup>9</sup> and got the remark : "The book has marked out an epoch in our literature" and "This is sure to give him a prominent place in the rank of prominent poets and writers". In the next year the big volume of "*Thakurdadar Jhuli*" (Bengal Nights) came out of the press. This was followed by the publication of two other volumes, viz , "*Bangalar Bratakatha—Thandidir Thole*" and "*Banglar Rasokatha—Dada Masayer Thole*". These four publications were praised in 'Times Literary Supplement' with following words : "The most wonderful volumes.....wonder is that none has yet translated the marvels of *Thakurmar Jhuli*, *Bangopanyas—Thakurdadar Jhuli*, *Thandidir Thole* and *Dadamashayer Thole*",<sup>10</sup>

Dr. J. D. Anderson referring to these books wrote : Admirable, pleasant, quaint, a meeting of East and West... .

Why did I not come across all these pleasant things when I was younger. I might then have translated Dakshinaranjan's works into English.<sup>11</sup>

Before the second world war Dakshinaranjan's "*Thakurmar Jhuli*" was translated into the German language. "*Thandidir Thole*" and "*Thakurmar Jhuli*" were included in the list of approved books of studies for B. Sc. Honours of the Calcutta University in the subject of Anthropology in 1928. These two books were elaborately discussed in "Banga Bhasha O Sahitya", "Folk Literature of Bengal" and other books of Dr. Dineshchandra Sen.

From 1908, Dakshinaranjan's writings on various subjects began to appear. His famous book of song 'Ma Ba Ahuti'

8. This, of course, bespeaks of his weakness of conviction.

9. Later Shri Aurobindo.

10. Quoted from Late Rabiranjan Mitra-Majumdar's unpublished sketch supplied to the author by his sister Smt. Kalyani Some.

11. Ibid.

(Mother or Sacrifice) became famous. Its theme was on Bengal partition movement of 1905-6. Some of the specimens of Dakshinaranjan were rendered into English by Dr. Dineshchandra Sen from the Bengali text. By the effort of Dineshchandra the non-Bengali readers came to know Dakshinaranjan and the spirit, diction and ideas of these folktales. G. Raichoudhury translated his *Lakshmir Brata-katha* (Lakshmi ritual folktale) which was published in "Indian Folklore", Sept-Dec., 1956. *Thakurdadar Jhuli* (old grandfather's bagful of tales) was published in 1909. All the illustration of these book were drawn by Dakshinaranjan himself. Then, *Thandidir Thole* (old Grand Dame's bagful of stories) and *Dadamashayer Thole* (old Grand Sire's bagful of tales) came out. All these books were hailed by juvenile readers and still maintain their high degree of popularity. Almost in every educated Bengali home boys, girls and adults alike scramble to read them.

These books also drew admiration from Pandit Haraprasad Shastri, an eminent scholar, writer and connoisseur in literary subjects and archaeology. He too once paid a visit to Dakshinaranjan, talked over Dakshinaranjan's mission and found satisfaction in his collection of folk materials. *Silpacharya* Abanindranath and many others fell into friendship with him. While remarking on Dakshinaranjan Dr. Dineschandra Sen said—"His work is not affected by any pedantry or scholarship in classic literature or any modern propagandaism for Mitra-Majumdar is too humble a scholar to aim at higher things. He is in love with tales as they are related by the rural people of the lower Gangetic valley, and gives a faithful version of what he has heard."<sup>12</sup> Pointing out some omissions of the author of 'The Oral Tales of India' Dr. Heinz Mode expressed his sorrow and has correctly focussed our attention to—"the most recent studies on Indian folk literature is the publication on 'The Oral Tales of India' by Stith Thompson and Jones Balys, Bloomington, 1958 (U. S. A.). Here we look in vain for the name of

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12. Folk Literature of Bengal, University of Calcutta, 1920.

Dakshinaranjan Mitra-Majumdar, though we find some of his recorded tales under the name of other authors. Of course, it would be wrong to blame the American authors for utilising merely the English versions as this is a folklore publication, and we cannot expect all scholars on comparative folklore to understand all Indian languages. But the fact remains that in the publication mentioned Bengal's folktales being registered for the use of comparative folklore research, are in many respects deprived of their proper appearance and thus of their actual position within the whole complex of Indian Folklore....."<sup>13</sup>

"Aryanari" was published in 1910 in two parts and written by two person one of whom is Dakshinaranjan. The first part deals with noteworthy women of Vedic and Pauranic (mythical) ages and the second treats of historical women down to Rani Bhabani (a feudal princess of North Bengal of the 18th century).

Dakshinaranjan, by this time, had made himself conspicuous in the field of literature and had written or edited a number of books.

He brought a series of books on juvenile psychology where he may be said a pioneer and on various subjects like education, science, history, general knowledge, social science, etc. His "Charu O Haru" is perhaps the first Bengali juvenile novel. He has undoubtedly raised the standard of juvenile literature in Bengal and has indicated a new way for the writers.

Dakshinaranjan was very fond of the association of little children and endeared himself with them. They would scramble around him to listen to his felicitous and charming turn of narrative of dreamland. He inspired juvenile journals with his counsel and contribution. His casual pieces are lying pent up here and there in the pages of such journals. The Bengali-reading public will derive further pleasure from them if they are published in a compiled work.

## Editor

Dakshinaranjan started his career as an editor & publisher of the periodical "Sudha" (Elixir—1901-04). In 1908 he came to be the chief editor of "Sarathi" (co-charioteer), a juvenile journal. From 1930 to 1932 he held both the offices of Vice-President and one of the editors of "Path", the organ of "Bangiya Bijnan Parishad" (a society devoted to promotion of study in science). He also edited the book entitled "Prithibir Rupkatha" (Fairy tales of the world).

## Artist

Dakshinaranjan also introduced a new line in Drawing Art. His talent from childhood of drawing picture has been of considerable benefit to his countrymen. Some of the brilliant pictures which we find in his '*Bangalar Kathasahitya*' (Folk Literature of Bengal) are his creations. Above all his pencil sketches "*Alakshita Chitra*" (unseen Art in the Nature) which were published in the widely circulated Bengali Monthly "*Vichitra*" were extremely original.

## Honour

The vacuum of Dakshinaranjan's life created by the bereavement in his old age has somewhat been filled up with honour and decoration piled upon him by his countrymen and various organisations. In 1305 B. S. "*Bandhab Samaj*", an association of Dacca, decorated him with the title "*Kabyananda*". He was awarded the title of "*Baniranjana*" in 1931 by *Sahitya Sammelan*, Calcutta. He was decorated with *Bhubaneswari Meda* by *Sisu Sahitya Parisad*, Calcutta as a mark of recognition of his contribution to juvenile literature. He was honoured by "*Loka Sanskriti Parisad*," "*Sabpeyechhir Asar*" of the Jugantar, "*Nandan*", "*Sahityatirtha*" (these are organizations devoted to literary and child-welfare activities). In 1956, honour was

bestowed upon him by the West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee at its Reception Ceremony of distinguished persons. It may be said to his credit that from 1930 to 1932 Dakshinaranjan was the first Vice-President of the Bengal Science Association (*Bangiya Bijnan Parisad*) of Calcutta. At that time he contributed articles on varied subjects specially on the subject of Geology, which were much instructive to the readers in the magazine of the *Parisad* ('Path') of which, it has already been mentioned, he was one of the editors. He took a leading part as one of the members of the Scientific Terminology Committee. The Dictionary on Scientific Terminology which was the outcome of this Committee, is the first of its kind in Bengal. It came out as far back as 1933. He was an examiner of the Calcutta University for not less than 20 years from 1921. Often he had occasions to preside over various meetings in Calcutta and gatherings in different parts of the country (Bengal, U. P., Orissa) or to adorn the chair of respected Chief Guest. His pieces were selected in the *Nehru Avinandan Granth* (Souvenir to welcome Nehru) which appeared in 1954 from New Delhi. He won international fame in his life time which reminds us again that for every honest and sincere work a genuine worker is bound to be recognised.

#### Conclusion

Dakshinarenjan Mitra-Majumdar will ever be remembered for his remarkable service in the field of folk literature. His zeal and passionate devotion in the presentation of the folkloristic materials have helped the modern folklorists to go ahead with a scientific research. The research on comparative folklore was initiated by Hartel and Henfey in the last century. They regard this land as mother country of all fables and fictions. Since then it has been accepted that the folktales of India have influenced the folktale literatures of the world. Dakshinaranjan Mitra-Majumdar's effort to preserve this rich tradition of Bengal



folklore helped us to close the gap that existed in this field of knowledge. To quote Mode again, "The industrialisation and the decay of rural life diminish our chances to collect the old time oral treasures, yet, if ever, it is the time now to record what is still available. It would be unjust not to mention in this connection the valuable work done by Verrier Elwin in the preservation of tribal lore, and by a few other scholars, especially in Assam and Orissa. But the *Rupkathas* and *Gitikathas* of Bengal, of far greater importance than tribal lore, for the comparative research and for the reconstruction of the ancient type-tales, which are at the root of the classical Indian versions and of many European tales, ought to be made available for international research. For this purpose not only the collection of yet unpublished material is necessary, but also the re-publication of Mitra-Majumdar's original versions in Bengal along with their translation and critical annotation."<sup>14</sup>

In this connection let us again recollect that he was the Chief Guest in Gurudas Memorial Anniversary Meeting, Darbhanga Hall, Calcutta University and was honoured with the following positions :

President—Bangiya Bijnan Parisad Scientific Terminology Committee special meeting.

President—Meeting of the Chamber of Commerce, Calcutta.

Addressed All India Teachers Conference, Calcutta.

He was the first President of the Juvenile section of 'Prabasi Banga Sahitya Sammelan' (Session—Benaras) and was the first President—All India Manimela Mahasammelan.

In the Annual Meeting of the 'Sisu Sahitya Parisad' Mitra-Majumdar was awarded the famous 'Bhubaneswari Medal' by Dr. Kailasnath Katju, the then Governor of West Bengal in 1957 B. S. This Medal was awarded to him as a token of general appreciation of his famous book "*Thakurmar Jhuli*" (the first book of the 'Bangalar Katha

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14. Ibid.

Sahitya' series), which Medal was also been awarded to Abanindranath Tagore.

In a special welcome (Sarmbardhana) meeting of the *Bangiya Loka Sanskrit Parisad* of Calcutta Mitra-Majumdar was presented with a "*Manpatra*"<sup>15</sup> on his literary activities, and in the *Manpatra* he was addressed 'Katha Sahitya Samrat' (Emperor of Folk Literature) in 1359 B. S.

Mitra-Majumdar's contribution "Kumar Murti" was translated from original Bengali in two volumes in English and Hindi.

Mitra-Majumdar was awarded the title "Baniranjan" by a Calcutta Literary association.

Many of Mitra-Majumdar's articles, poems and stories and books have been broadcast from the Calcutta Station of the All-India Radio from time to time. Some of his books have also been dramatised by some literary men. Most of his books are very popular and are treated as classical writings. He touches on the chords of idealism and realism spreading its harmony far and wide. By the introduction of new paths, hitherto untrodden in the literary world he is one of the fathers of the modern Bengali literature. His writings above all are free from the western and Sanskritic influences. He is famous in Bengal as the emperor of folk literature.

It is to be noted in this connection that Dakshinaranjan lost his wife in 1944. Then came the sad death of his son Prof. Rabiranjan Mitra-Majumdar in 1951. After this mishap he got another shock in the death of his son-in-law, Sushilranjan Roychaudhury in 1956. These contrarieties could not overwhelmed him with grief and lead him to idle. He got himself engaged in writing and telling stories to the juveniles. He took it as occupation till the last date of his life. He was a friend, philosopher and guide to a great many writers of the juvenile literature.

Out of his childrens only two daughters (1) Pratimarani Das and (2) Kalyani Shome are now living.

Dakshinaranjan played with his pen and with the children till the last day of his life. We are sorry to record his death in the year 1957 when he was 15 days to 80 years of age. We believe, he will be held in a perpetual memory for his unique works.

## Bibliographical Notes

The stage of career of Dakshinaranjan may be divided as under :

- (1) Folklorist—Collector of folktales and different materials.
- (2) Editor—Sudha, Sarathi, Path, etc.
- (3) Writer—contributions appeared in Pradip, Prabasi, Bharati, Sabujpatra, Path, Indian Folklore and many others.
- (4) Poet—Besides the books numerous poems appeared in different periodicals and newspapers.
- (5) Author—"Bangalar Katha Sahitya series' are his prominent works.
- (6) Father of juvenile literature—From 'Charu-o-Haru' to other original books.
- (7) Educationist—Connection with the University of Calcutta and Bangiya Bijnan Parisad.
- (8) Orator—Delivery of different lectures as presidents and chief guests etc. in different meetings.

Dakshinaranjan was intimately connected with the eminent personalities of his times.

### Translation

- (a) Translated into German—Thakurmar Jhuli.
- (b) Translated into Hindi—Charu-O-Haru and some of his folktales.

The following books are ready to print which are the selections of his writings from various periodicals. This we learn from his daughter Smt. Kalyani Shome :

### (A) Published works—

- (1) Katha Sahitya ( Folktales )
- (2) Stories for the old.
- (3) Poetry for all
- (4) Poetry for the children
- (5) Poetry for the young
- (6) Juvenile stories
- (7) Selected writings of the Author.

**(B) Manuscript—**

- (1) *Katha Sahitya* (Folktale)
- (2) Mystic poems
- (3) Popular science
- (4) Juvenile novels
- (5) Juvenile stories
- (6) Abstract essays
- (7) Higher science (incomplete work).

The following books listed year-wise of which we have said in the text. They are written in Bengali and mostly are confined to the juvenile readers. The adults also get pleasure to read his books.

1902	Utthan
1907	Thakurmar Jhuli
1908	Ma Ba Ahuti
1908-10	Aryanari (In two volumes conjointly)
1909	Thakurdadar Jhuli
1909	Khoka Khukur Khela
1909	Thandidir Thole
1910	Saral Chandi (Conjointly)
1912	Charu-O-Haru
1912	Amal Bai
1913	Dadamahasayer Thole
1918	Pujar Katha
1927	Bhadra
1927	First Boy
1927	Last Boy
1928	Utpal O Robi
1933	Kumar Murti
1933	Kishorder Mon
1935	Banglar Sonar Chelle (biography of Rabindranath)
1938	Sabuj Lekha
1939	Prithibir Rupkatha (Edited)
1947	Chiradiner Rupkatha
1947	Amar Desh
1948	Ashirvani
1951	The Golden Jubili edition of Thakurmar Jhuli.

It is to be noted here that from 1927 onward Dakshinaranjan's writings were confined to sundry forms of juvenile literature.



*Folklorists Bengal*



Born 1882

Gurusaday Dutt

Died 1941



## GURUSADAY DUTT ( 1882-1941 )

Devotion to husband is held as a great virtue for the woman in our Bengalee society while a steadfast and abiding devotion to wife is not to be extolled in Bengal. Of course, in the pages of history, poetry and traditional lore some examples of contrary type can be found. Perhaps a sense of indignity is associated with the spirit of attachment to wife. Such an uxorious man is termed a henpecked one. But by words and deeds Gurusaday Dutt made against this popular concept and for this he is held in high esteem by the womenfolk of Bengal. His unswerving love for his departed consort found satisfaction in his dedication to social service in general and to the welfare of womanhood in particular. This has immortalised him.

Gurusaday Dutt had lived a conjugal life for about 20 years. His wife Sarojnalini died at the age of 37. Though he could not claim any credit by erecting any edifice like Tajmahal<sup>1</sup> to the memory of his beloved wife, in his humble way he tried to perpetuate the memory of his consort by establishing "Sarojnalini Narimangal Samitee" and has written books both in English and Bengali on her. His attempt at reclamation of elements of culture was his another role. He is the originator of famous Bratachari Movement which aims at development of physical and moral faculties of young boys and girls and the spirit of cooperation, fellow-feeling and discipline among them by the way of folk culture. It is to be noted in this connection that during his fourth visit to England in January, 1929<sup>2</sup> he went to Folk

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1. Recently an Indian historian has put forth some materials by which he wants to prove that the Tajmahal is not a creation of Shahjahan in memory of his beloved wife Nurjahan. It was a Hindu Temple which was ultimately converted to a tomb. Up to this date, this Maharashtra historian has not got so much of support by which he can change the history or the popular conviction.

2. Gurusaday went to Europe this time to attend the International



Dance Festival at Royal Albert Hall in London. There he witnessed Boy Scouts movement and was also influenced by the same started by Baden-Powell.<sup>3</sup> He got inspiration from it and "the festival become the historian of his memoirs." On his return to India in November of the same year he established Folk Dance & Song Society at Mymensingh, where he was the District Magistrate which soon developed into many branches in many districts of Bengal. Gradually it grew from strength to strength. In 1932 the Society organised the first folk dance training camp<sup>4</sup> and the seeds 'Bratachari' movement were sown under the able leadership of Gurusaday Dutt. In 1936 the Bratachari Society of Bihar was established and in 1940 Bratachari Society of South India was formed. The mission of Gurusaday Dutt was to bring into clear perspective the robust and genial manners of the elements of folk culture and to make them known and popular among the urban people who have deviated from the main stream of the country masses. He was successful in his mission.. In this connection we call attention to British Civilians of the last century. A large section of them did not confine themselves only to their administrative duty but identified themselves with social, educational and cultural activities of our country. Their footsteps were followed by some altruist Bengali Civilians who came forward to join force with all our progressive movements. They contributed to our literature and advancement of learning and participated in our cultural movements. In this regard the name of Satyendranath Tagore and Rameschandra Datta deserve mentioning. This century saw con-

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Agricultural Conference held in Rome, as a representative of the Govt. of India. During this time he also attended Adult Education Conference in Cambridge and published the book from London entitled : 'A woman of India' in reply to the book 'Mother India'.

3. Robert Stephenson Smythe Baden-Powell ( 1857-1941 ). Gained experience in Military Scouting in India and Afganistan ; later he was employed in espionage.

4. First All Bengal Folk Dance Training Camp, Suri, Birbhum. The Bratachari Society was established in this Camp on 23rd Magh (7th February).

siderable number of Indian Civilians who have gone far into literary activity but it is the Civilian Jnanendranath Gupta who can be singled out as an educationist. Civilian Gurusaday Dutt laid himself out to deal with all the facts of our cultural standard and improve upon them.

#### Childhood

Gurusaday Dutt was born in the village of Birasree in the district of Sylhet (now in E. Pakistan) on 10th May, 1882. This 10th May,<sup>5</sup> by association of ideas, reminds us of the red-letter day when the first struggle for independence began with the firing of first bullet. He was the youngest issue in a family of six children. His father Ramkrishna Dutt was a renowned man and mother, Anandamayee was an excellent housewife. The elder uncle Radhakrishna Dutt was the head of the family.

Gurusaday had three brothers and three sisters. It is to be noted in this connection that a distant relative of Gurusaday was converted to Mohammadanism. Still there was a family relation with his converted relative and his family. Abdul Gaffar was a descendant of this converted Muslim who had a close relation with Gurusaday. The reason for pointing out this fact is to show that as a family they were unbiassed and unorthodox. From this family tradition he got an unbiassed and non-sectarian outlook. This helped him to a great extent to organise different associations and organisations in later days.

The surname of the house of Gurusaday was Dutta Chaudhuri, but his father used only the second half, that is, *Chaudhuri* after his name. In later years Gurusaday choose to append the first half namely, Dutt.

#### Education

The early life of Gurusaday was spent within the bounds of his native village. On completion of his study at his village school he was admitted into the High School of

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5. This is the great revolt of 1857. All over the country there was a great deal of dissatisfaction and discontent against the British. By whatever name one may be inclined to designate it, this movement was not accidental so some people of India regard 10th May, as national uprising Day.

Karimganj. He grew up as a restive boy much pampered by his parents. The effect of this lasted even in his later life. He was quick-tempered and could be as easily irritated as pacified. In a fit of rage he could go any length of vilification. But on coming back to his senses, if it occurred to him that he had done something wrong, he at once admitted his misconduct.

Gurusaday was fortunate to have Tarakchandra Ray as his teacher. He had the gift of attaching boys to rural pleasures. He ingrained in Gurusaday a mono-idealism of country-life. On many occasions Gurusaday expressed his indebtedness to this teacher of his early life who had been a guiding star and source of inspiration to his life. In his pupilage, while a student at Karimganj High School, he lost his parents. He was then 14 years of age. At the age of 16<sup>6</sup> he passed the Entrance Examination being placed second in order of merit. The death of his parents had put him to straitened circumstances. At this juncture "*Srihatta Sammilani*"<sup>7</sup> came to his aid. The *Sammilani* gave him to understand that if he could pass the F. A. Examination and occupy the first position, the *Sammilani* would arrange to send him to England for higher study. This assurance heartened him up and he set himself to hard study. His strenuous study was effective enough. He passed the F. A. Examination topping the list of successful candidates. In pursuance of the resolution of the *Sammilani* he was sent to England at their expense in 1903. He got through the Indian Civil Service Examination in 1904 in which he stood seventh on the list of successful candidates. He spent probationary period at Emmanuel College at Cambridge. He then studied Law and stood first in Constitutional Law among the examinees. He came home with fresh laurels when he was appointed Sub-Divisional Officer of Arrah District<sup>8</sup> in 1905 when the movement against the partition of Bengal was in full swing.

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6. In 1898.

7. An association to look after the welfare of the people of Sylhet.

8. It was with Bengal then. During this time there was an attempt to divide Bengal but due to *Banga Bhanga Andolan* it was suspended. In 1911 the division of Bengal took place when there was no movement at all and a great many portion of Bengal was adjoined with Bihar and Assam.

On his return to India from U. K. in 1905 he became a Sub-Divisional Officer at Arrah district now in Bihar. From there he was transferred to Gaya as the Deputy Magistrate. Gurusaday chose the services in the Law Department. Up to 1911 certain portion of Bihar as we see today was a part of Bengal. The Bengal Partition Movement of 1905-06 was an obstacle to implement the plan of the then British Rulers to divide Bengal, which virtually was effected in 1911 and curiously enough, when the proposition came into effect in 1911, there was no movement nor any protest for the division of Bengal. Bengal got another setback in 1947 when Radcliffe Award ultimately divided Bengal into West Bengal and Eastern Pakistan.

#### Early inspiration

In his boyhood Gurusaday got admitted into local school of his native village. Of all the teachers of the school, the teacher Tarakchandra Ray who hailed from Dacca was the moral mentor of Gurusaday. Gurusaday was immensely indebted to this teacher of his besides his father and uncles. Tarakchandra introduced games of football and cricket in the village of Birasree. He was inclined to agriculture. He used to till land personally and encouraged the local gentry to do so. The following story told by Tarakchandra to his pupils had a telling effect on Gurusaday : In retaliation for incursion of Hindusthan, Ranjit Singh, who was styled as the lion of Punjab, invaded Kabul. At the battle of Nausera Pathans were killed in such a large number that their skeletons lay in heaps in the field of battle for long. Indolent boys of Kabul were shown those heaps by their guardians so that the boys can take lessons from them and were urged to be up and doing to remove the stigma of defeat. In this way Tarakchandra taught them not to be inactive and indolent. He would say, "If anybody attacks you, would you then be given to stroking your dress, or be ready for fight?" He wanted the boys to be smartyl

dressed. He preached against donning of "Dhoti" with its frontal folds loosely hanging. He would say, "If anybody charges you, would you then while away your time in tucking up the folds or at once be ready for fight?" It is to be noted here that in no other province than Bengal\* wearing of "Dhoti" in this style is in vogue. It is probable that the maxim "*Kancha Jhulaiya Chaliba na*", one of the slogans of the Bratacharis, traces its origin from the teaching of Tarakchandra. Tarakchandra used to read out to the boys "Maharashtra Jibanprabhat", "Jiban Sandhay" etc., the books inspiring patriotism. He told and retold heroic deeds of Shibaji. He was a subscriber to the magazines, (1) Sanjibani and (2) Monthly Janmabhumi. Then a narrative of military life of Durgadas Bandyopadhyay was being published in series in "Janmabhumi".<sup>10</sup> He read the adventurous life history to the boys and asked them to be courageous.

Wherein lies the fountain-head of inspiration of Bratacharis? The answer is that it is in the heart of village life—in the escapades into open air, in unimposing but invigorating games and sports, in the songs and dance, fairs and festivals—all breathing a healthy air conducive to development of sound mind and body and creating an atmosphere of jovial mood. The theme and spirit of this conviviality have been personified in Gurusaday. His realization he wanted to convey to his countrymen through *Bratachari* movement. Like an explorer he was in quest of vital force that maintains buoyancy of our people and discovered it in the country life of Bengal,

#### Career

It is wellknown that Gurusaday started his career as a Civil Servant, which required him to move from district to district. His artistic frame of mind urged him to glean in

9. The World 'Province' is now abolished and is substantiated to 'State'.

10. Lately it appeared in book form entitled as *Bidroho Bangalee ba Amar Jiban Charit* (Bengalees in revolt or my autobiography). Published by Bangabasi Karyalay on 20th Bhadra 1331 B. S.

the field of Bengal's folk culture—folk-art, craft, music and dance. He went on carrying on his investigation till it so happened that in 1925 the cruel hand of death snatched away Sarojinalini, the accomplished consort of this devoted worshipper of the Muses. Her death gave Gurusaday a rude shock and turned his course of life. There is no denying the fact, when Gurusaday was busy for the collection and folk entertainment functions he was suspected by some as the spy of the British Government. Dr. Benoy Sarkar broke the ice of this misunderstanding by supporting Gurusaday Dutt's activities through his book 'Folk element in Hindu Culture' (1917) and in *Benoy Sarkarer Baithake*".<sup>11</sup>

Gurusaday was posted in the district of Birbhum as its District Magistrate in 1930. There he had an opportunity observe girls of the sophisticated class in the exercise of classical dance vis-a-vis a vigorous and riotous dance displayed by groups of simple social standing. The dance of the latter heartened him up and caught his imagination. It was the "Raybenshe"<sup>12</sup> dance of which we hear now so

11. *Benoy Sarkarer Baithake*, Crown size p. 770, 2nd edition appeared in 1944 by Chakravarty Chatterjee & Co. and was edited by Haridas Mukhopadhyaya. This book was for a long time out-of-print which has recently been re-issued from Calcutta.

12; Sri Mukundaram Chakravarty mentioned in 'Chandimangal' about the *Raybenshe*.

বাজন হুপূর পায়      বীর বঁটা পাইক ধায়  
রায়বীরা ধায় ধরসান

and Bharatchandra in his 'Annadamangal' has mentioned :

“ভবকী ধামুকী ঢালী রায়বীরা বাল ।  
দকাদার জয়াদার চলে সন্নিগাল ॥  
আগে পিছে হাজারীর হাজার হাজার  
নটনটই হরকরা উরাছ বাজার ॥

Two terracotta figurines of Raybense soldiers discovered by Acharya Nandalal Basu are being preserved in Sriniketan Museum. Up to the sixteenth century these soldiers fought bravely for freedom and integrity. Besides Mangalkavyas, in R. C. Hill's Bengal in 1756-57 Vol. I, II, in Hunter's Annals of Rural Bengal, and in Census Report 1931 the mention of these mighty soldiers is observed. The research section of Bratachari Kendriya Nayak Mandal, Calcutta, are working on for the compilation of a detailed history on this mighty folks of Bengal.

much. This "Raybenshe" dance had long been in vogue in Radh.<sup>13</sup> But this type of dance had been obsolescent. It was discouraged simply because it was practised by the downtrodden class, who once belonged to the martial race of Bengal. This "Raybenshe" dance is a martial dance. Gurusaday raised the status of this dance and gave it the stamp of cultural asset of a nation. Gradually he became a patron and champion of folk culture. Though he was in the exalted position of a District Magistrate, he did not feel it beneath his dignity to join hands with the rabble of our society and to learn from them. He learned and mastered the different types of folk dance, which in his turn he taught the Bratacharis. He placed that art for the first time on a firm footing of recognition. He picked up the obscure dance forms, such as *Dhali*, *Jari* and *Pujarini* etc., and introduced them to the sophisticated public through the Bratachari movement.

Gurusaday was a true Bengalee. He used to remark, if we want to have racial solidarity of the people of Bengal every Bengali-speaking person, be he Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist or Christian by faith, or anyone professing some other faith, must introduce himself as a Bengalee. He had the courage of his conviction, which he proved by his action. During the census of 1931 he was marked "Kayastha" by caste in the form of descriptive statement. He was much exasperated at the mention of his caste, called back the form and was pacified to get the word "Bengalee" entered in place of "Kayastha".

#### Marriage

In 1906 he married Sarojnalini Debi, fourth daughter of Civilian Brojendranath De, the then S.D.O. of Gaya District. Three years later, in 1909, his only son Birendrasaday was born in Hooghly. At the time of their marriage Gurusaday

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13. Roughly, the tract of land covering the districts of Hooghly, Burdwan, Birbhum and Murshidabad was known as Radh.

was 24 years of age when Sarojnalini was running par 18 years. He was then the Deputy Magistrate of Gaya district.

### Sarojnalini

His wife Sarojnalini was source of inspiration for the discovery and popularization of the folk-songs and dances and other cultural aspects. Let us quote Sima Mukherjee : "Sarojnalini too had a large part to play in the collection of folk elements of our culture which she patronaged wherever she had been with her husband, Gurusaday. She also took great interest in village social service. She was a source of his inspiration, being by his side, during her lifetime. It may well be stated that the ball was set in motion and gathered momentum after her demise. The elements of *brata* in Bratachari songs and dances specially suited to women, art of needlework, specially in *kantha* of Bengali women, are cases in point.

"Mention has been made of the basic principles on Bratas earlier. There are still three promises which every Bratachari is supposed to take, (1) "I am a Bengalee (2) I love the land of Bengal (3) I shall serve Bengal. The span was later expanded to Bharat.<sup>14</sup> There are five *bratas* determining the principles of conduct, namely, Satyabrata, Jnanabrata, Aikyabrata, Sramabrata, Anandabrata. There are, of course, a set of sixteen *manas* e. g. কোঁচা বুলাইয়া চলব না, ইত্যাদি। They are aimed at decency, integrity and alertness of personality. For young children, twelve *panas* are there, for example we shall laugh, play, dance in joy etc. etc.

"Gurusaday collected folk-songs and dances from the tribal and rural people of Birbhum as also from the boatman of Eastern Bengal, for example, the line দাওয়াইল্যা বানাইয়া ঘোরে

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14 Jai Sonar Banglar.

Jai Sonar Bharater.

Jai Sonar Bhubaner.

These are the slogans of the Bratacharies.



কাল্পনিকের মাঝি... Even some western tunes find their place in bratachari songs for example, ব্রতচারী করে বেশ কীভাবে কি মজা তাই.<sup>15</sup> The ideas of campfire the vows and *panas* are equally potential forces."<sup>16</sup>

#### Bratachari Society

A vigorous folk cultural movement had started in western countries since the first quarter of this century, and the people there tended to value respective folk elements much as their national heritage. The townsfolk developed a taste for folk music and dance, which was sought to be inculcated on them by frequent recital of folk music and display of folk dance. In even line a folklore movement was worked up in 1932 by the Bengal Bratachari Society.

'*Brata*' signifies a solemn ideal or object which is pursued as a rhythmic ritual and '*chari*' denotes one who pursues such an ideal or purpose. The term '*Bratachari*' denotes one who holds the view that all life is based on joy and should be pursued as a rhythmic ritual or in other words, as a sacred *Brata* or mission transfused with joy.

Let us quote here the writings of an ex-member of the Bratachari Society, which may give a pen-picture about the movement and its initiator, which states :

"During his stay in England he was much inspired by the benevolent and positive effect of the Scout movement to congregate the juveniles to build up a sound future. Later on, as he opted his service in Bengal (then undivided) he had the privilege to experience the rural life of Bengal—the weal and woe, the ideas and aspirations of the peasantry and commoners. This, on the one hand, rendered him azeal to make social reforms to eradicate the evil elements in rural Bengal and also among the general public. On the other hand, his personal intimacy with the folk people opened a new avenue of propagating this mission in a non-classical style. Gurusaday Dutt had the intuition of

15. This song is set to the tune of "O my darling clementine."

16. Quoted from 'Folklore' Vol. IV No. 2, February, 1963.

realising that ideas and ideals disseminated through upholding common problems and posing the solution in a folk way, would receive popular appeal. He got as his tool energetic youngsters of both the sexes, composed verses and trained them to sing these lyrics with physical feats. Thus the boys and girls were given a chance of building up themselves with a sound mind in a sound body.

"These trainees were labelled as *Bratacharins*, that is, those who abided by *bratas* or vows. Vows were five in number viz : *jnana brata* (of wisdom), *srama bata* (of labour), *aikya brata* (of unity), *satya brata* (of truth) *ananda brata* (of gaiety). The vows were to be followed individually ; and utmost efforts were to be made to make new converts. While pursuing with these pledges they recited melodious verses and practised such activities as might cause an overall upliftment of the mass.

"Below, let us take a few typical songs (*given in free translation into English*) and scan the content and background :

- (1) 'Let us work on the spade,  
Forgetting fake sense of prestige,  
Shaking off that idleness,  
Let us tone up our physique,  
All ailments that there may be  
Will quit us so promptly.  
Our belly will burn in appetite  
Thus we will relish palatable sweets.
- (2) Let us unite to uproot the water-hyacinth.  
This *rakshusi* (female demon) of Bengal  
is causing great havoc to her.  
We will deport the hyacinth,  
Felling the dense growth,  
We will bring in new light and new air.'
- (3) 'Sesamum gives oil and milk gives curd ;  
From paddy we get puffed and chaffed rice ;

That is fine brother, bravo brother.  
 Green are the plants and leaves ;  
 Red is the simul flower ;  
 That is fine brother, bravo brother.  
 Keep mum brother, tarry a little,  
 Gather you all Hindus and Muslims,  
 We will sing jari songs in your name.  
 Our *salam* to the Muslim brethren,  
 Our *pranam* to the Hindu brethern.'

- (4) 'Come all we play together raibenshe  
 We will dance raibenshe; we will dance raibenshe-  
 Contemptible it is not ;  
     Excellent art it is ;  
 Being absorbed, the fear-complex,  
     We break within a moment.  
 Being rhythmic, the fear-complex,  
     We break within a moment.'
- (5) 'Mother Bengal's daring sons we are—  
 Unfatigued, untired, firm in danger  
 Heroism of Palraja of Western Bengal,  
 Poetic glory of Chandidas and Jaidev.  
 Their waves give new energy to our mind,  
 We will enkindle bright lamp of new age.'
- (6) 'We women of Bengal,  
 Declare open this dictum,  
 Hail we will the flag ;  
 Oh God, keeping you at the helm,  
 Keeping you at the helm,  
 Meditating new ideas,  
 We bring new life to our country.'<sup>17</sup>

The idealism of service to humanity as portrayed by Bankimchandra in "Anandamath" and the spirit of service founded by Swami Vivekananda through 'Ramkrishna Mission' of hallowed memory, caught his imagination and

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17. Quoted from Smt. Sima Mukherjee's "Folk Sentiments and background in Bratachari Song." 'Folklore' Vol. III, No. 12, December, 1962,

in his own way he proceeded in a missionary spirit to establish the Bratachari Society. He held that the best artistic and social forms we find in our sophisticated society to-day owe their origin to the creative genius of the unsophisticated country society.

It is to be noted here that the Bratachari movement is based on physical, mental and spiritual discipline through the medium of rhythmic vows and songs expressive of high ideal of character. Every Bratachari has to take the following vows in order to attain solemn *Brata* of life—*Knowledge—Labour, Truth—Unity and Joy* :

1. Extending the bounds of knowledge.
2. Banishment of jungles and weeds.
3. Enhancing the dignity of labour.
4. Cultivation of vegetables and fruits.
5. Free circulation of light and air.
6. The care of cattle.
7. Maintaining the purity of water.
8. Observance of tidiness.
9. Promotion of Physical exercise and play.
10. Emancipation of women.
11. Be gentle, modest and tolerant.
12. The pursuit of crafts and industries.
13. Dedication of Self to Service.
14. Observance punctuality.
15. Developing the spirit of fellowship and equal citizenship.
16. Promotion of the spirit of joy.
17. Smartness in dress.
18. Manners in conversation.
19. Unity is strength.

Besides, a Bratachari also pursue the following additional vows not compartmentally but in an integrated fashion so that the wholeness of a life may be attained :

1. Avoidance of waste.
2. Conservation along with progress.
3. Obedience to the leader.

4. Development through self-sacrifice.
5. Cleanliness in thought, word and deed.
6. Smartness of behaviour.

In addition to the above, a Bratachari has to observe the following 14 'Don'ts' :—

1. I will not eat unless hungry.
2. I will not spend beyond my earning.
3. I will not give way to fear before danger or obstacle.
4. I will not indulge in luxury.
5. I will not exhibit anger even when angry.
6. I will not forget to smile even in misfortune.
7. I will not be puffed up with pride.
8. I will not be untrue in thought or spirit.
9. I will not be discourteous in manner.
10. I will not place reliance on luck, chance or destiny.
11. I will not rest till goal is reached.
12. I will not flee from failure.
13. I will not beg.
14. I will not break a promise.

There are also other practical rules of conduct which form a part of the enrolment ceremony, as for example, not to speak to more than one at a time, or louder than is necessary ; not to despise any kind of manual work or to remain dependent on others ; to learn something new and to cast off some fault every day and not to entertain ill-will towards any one.

There are twelve distinctive and characteristic vows for the '*Chho-Bas*' or *Junior Bratacharis*, viz.,

1. I shall run, play and laugh.
2. I shall love one and all.
3. I shall obey my elders.
4. I shall read, write and learn.
5. I shall be kind to animals.
6. I shall speak the truth.
7. I shall tread the path of truth.
8. I shall make things with my hands.
9. I shall build my body strong.
10. I shall fight for the team.
11. I shall labour with my limbs.
12. I shall dance with joy.

This movement has proved to be powerful agency for promoting a balanced outlook in education both for the adults as well as for the juveniles.

## Folk-Song and Dance Society

Gurusaday Dutt was appointed a member of the Council of State by the Government of India. Even during his short stay in Delhi he saw his way to establish "All India Folk Song and Dance Society"<sup>18</sup> (1932). After his sojourn at Delhi he came back to Bengal and engrossed himself with activities promoting folk-art and culture. His Civil Service required him to travel far and wide in Bengal and at his leisure he travelled in countryside and collected specimens of folk-art and craft, which he kept as exhibits in his own museum.

He had a rational theory of nation-building. He conceived that no theoretical knowledge, no poetic transport, no mooning about visionary stuff, no physical culture, no athletics, taken singly, can lead a nation to eminence. A harmonious co-ordination of these different virtues goes to the all-round development of a nation. The educated people should cast aside their academic aloofness and come down from high pedestal of their accomplishment to embrace the unlettered mass, who are really the potential strength of our country and in whom all our native characteristics are pronounced. This is the principle that he taught the *Bratacharis* to follow and styled as peaceful co-existence of brain and limbs of body corporate of a nation. On one hand, he treasured craftsmanship of the artisans of Bengal, for example, clay modelling, *Patua* paintings, woodcrafts and other forms of folk-crafts, more than any Bengali folk-art lovers of his time, and on the other hand he equally valued such folk arts like folk dance and folk music. He has reclaimed folk dance and music forms from a wasting state and disseminated the same among the educated people rousing their interest. His mission speaks for his catholic interest in folk culture.

How powerful this movement has been evident from the fact that it has been introduced not only in Primary and Secondary education levels but also it has formed a part of

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18. This Society was abolished during the life time of Gurusaday.

Physical Education in Physical Training College, Teachers' Training Camps for men and women teachers. The Development Project of Five-year Plan is also utilising Bratachari ideals in the implementation of their programmes.

It has been used by the jail authorities for training warders for recreational activities among the prisoners.

Its influence has been recognised by the following eminent philosophers and scholars :

"May the Bratachari Movement soon spread throughout the length and breadth of the country. I feel confident that wherever it is adopted, it will conduce to the development of joy of spirit, capacity for work, strength of character and enthusiasm for social service."

—*Rabindranath Tagore.*

"The Bratachari Movement attempts to transform the mind, body and soul of the average Indian villager as well town-dweller, and to instil into those brought within its influence the essential qualities of fearlessness, courage, discipline, team-spirit, a sense of power and a spirit of dedication to the uplift of our common motherland. If all our schools and colleges take to this movement in its fullest measure, they will help in contributing to the building of a rejuvenated Indian nation of which we shall all be proud."

—*Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan.*

"This indigenous system has spread and done more for the physical well-being of children in two years than other systems have accomplished over a number of years ; there is something in these rhythmic exercises which captures the imagination and the impetus thus set up carries it forward to practical fruition."

—*Rev. Victor J. White of the British Mission.*

Sir Michael Sadler, the well-known authority on Indian education, had formally enrolled himself as a Bratachari and

declared: "The movement is well planned and rightly inspired. It is Indian, which is essential. It is encouraging, invigorating, spiritual, integrating and inclusive, bracketing together the essentials of a vigorous, purposeful and happy life. With continued and unselfish leadership it will go far and bearing blessings to millions in Bengal and elsewhere."

Gurusaday had another mission of his life—elevation of women by proper education and training and equipping them as "ministering angels" to our society. His "Sarojnalini Dutt Narimangal Samitee" (a multipurpose association devoted to the welfare of women) has made his mission successful and stands as a symbol of one of service to woman. He also felt that the women are the supplement of men.

#### Folk-art Collector

Gurusaday Dutt had left behind a rich collection of materials representing physiognomy of the past patterns of art, aesthetics and documents of folk interest for the museum of his rural university. Gurusaday Dutt desired to establish a rural university in Bengal and with this object in view he purchased a spacious plot of land in Thakurpukur, near Calcutta for folk culture. He could not, however, find opportunity to utilize them for furthering our knowledge in folk culture. He had a passionate national feeling which sometimes were misunderstood by his countrymen.

Dr. Sunitikumar Chattopadhyay observed as follows in connection with his passionate national feeling: "On an occasion I had dissension with Gurusaday when I noticed his reckless and passionate national feeling. He used to be beside himself in acclaiming the handicrafts of Bengal—woodcrafts, clay-dolls, earthen wares, canvas paintings, terracottas of ancient Bengal. He would like to have one believe in what he himself believed in. He wanted to convince one that the standard of folk craft of Bengal had



far excelled those of all other countries. He claimed that the scenes of gala procession depicted on the plinth of the temple of Parthenon of Athens in Greece was no match for pictorial folk-art of Bengal. I argued that comparison was out of question here because every piece of art was considered perfect in its own sphere if it were a product of indigenous fantasy. I tried to clinch my argument by pointing him out, by way of illustration, that it was no use raising controversy over qualitative values of mango, cherry and pineapple."<sup>19</sup>

Gurusaday had a tender feeling about folk-art of Bengal and a conviction about its excellence actuated, of course, by a glowing spirit of patriotism. It can, therefore, be rightly said that he represented one of those virtues that the process of national reconstruction invariably wanted. Just as Abanindranath had his role of resuscitating Indian pictorial-art in the first place and other forms of art, which were supplemented in full by Nandalal Basu and other group of artists of Abanindra school, so also Gurusaday did his part in making us alive to the wealth of art, craft, song and dance of the neglected people of our countryside. As has been said before, Gurusaday has left behind an unaccomplished task. He collected documentary and significant materials by which an authentic and comprehensive history of folk-art could be compiled to prove with advantage the fact that for the last five centuries Hindu and Muslim cultures of Bengal had been blending in a common cauldron of traditional ways of the common folk and a homebred synthetic style of art and craft was evolved.

A sparse and spasmodic historic treatment of the subject by Gurusaday has appeared from time to time in various periodicals in essay forms. But those fell short of a full treatment. Now Bengali treatises on folk-arts and crafts have been brought out. But had that been a performance of Gurusaday that would have a special character and

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19. Translation from Bengali writings appeared in 'Banglar' Sakti' Guruji Memorial Number.

appeal. We have come across a notice in the back cover page of 'Folk Dances of Bengal' by G. S. Dutt, edited by Asok Mitra that a book entitled "The Folk-Art of Bengal" by G. S. Dutt is to be released shortly, but to our surprise, we have not yet seen that book. It may be noted that perhaps he was not mindful about the types of sculpture and art of paintings that were in vogue during the reign of 'Pal' and 'Sen' dynasties. He was also not conscious about the images of black jasper as also variety of images of gods and goddesses evolved by the Brahminical and Buddhistic faiths. Also perhaps, the wide range of images designed in *punthis* (palm leaves) and the architectural designs on stone work and brick work of mouldering temples did not interest him. We may point out here that the study and investigation of this aspect comes, of course, within the province of the specialists and archaeologists as also of those who like to take interest in this. Gurusaday, on his part, chose to deal with the art and craft forms that flourished after Turk invasion of Bengal, that is, during the middle ages.

#### Activities

In 1911 when Bihar and Bengal were formed into separate units, Gurusaday took the option to enter into the executive service of Bengal. The nature of the service requiring him to shift from one district to another, he had the experience of the districts of Pabna, Bogra, Faridpur, Barisal, Khulna, Comilla, Jessore, Dacca (all of which are now in Eastern Pakistan). For nearly 8 years he had to move from district to district. In Birbhum it chanced that his wistful yearning for folk-art came to be of a specified kind.

Gurusaday flew to Japan in 1919 along with Sarojnalini and Biréndrasaday. From there he went to Ceylon, England and France and returned to India in 1920.

In 1922 he wrote a fine book of *chhada* "Bhajar Banshi" (The Flute of Bhaja). After twelve years' service

in the Law Department he changed the post and became the Secretary in the Agriculture Department in 1923. He lost his wife within two years of this new appointment. Sarojnalini died on the 19th January, 1925 when she was only 37 years old. In the same year on the 23rd February he founded "Sarojnalini Narimangal Samitee" in remembrance of his departed wife. He travelled through villages opening branch organisations of the said Samitee, and brought out a monthly magazine "Bangalakshmi", a journal for the womenfolk. In 1926 he brought out another book on *chhada* "Gramer Kajer Ka, Kha, Ga, oraphe Mohamudgar". At the time when he was the District Magistrate of Howrah, the famous "Bamungachi Fire case" came up. Gurusaday's judgement went against the Police and the English soldiers. This issue was raised in the British Parliament. An influential Government-supported newspaper\* wrote four consecutive editorials against Gurusaday. He got the transfer order again. He took it as an exception. He applied for leave. It was granted. He went to England along with his son Birendrasaday and got him admitted into a Cambridge school. On his return from abroad he took up the charge of District Magistrate at Mymensingh. During this time Gandhiji started his *Dandi* movement. The powers ordered to fire on the unruly mob then agitated against the Government but Gurusaday stood against the order,\*\* as a result of which he was transferred to Birbhum district, a comparatively peaceful place.

In 1931 he founded "Palli Sampad Raksha Samitee" and organised a folk-song and dance function in Suri (Birbhum) Agriculture & Industry Fair. In 1932, he conducted the first All-Bengal Folk-Song & Dance camp and founded "Bharatiya Loka Nritya Samitee". He became the member of the Legislative Assembly in 1933. He was again transferred to Calcutta from Birbhum as the Secretary to the Labour Department. Then by turn he became the Director of Industries, Bengal and Secretary to the Ministry of Local Self-government. In 1935 he attended International

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\* The Statesman, Calcutta.

\*\* Bratachari Sathi, Vol. 1. No. 1.

Folk Dance Festival as a delegate from the University of Calcutta.

And in this year he initiated "Bangalar Sakti." He sailed for England again and under the patronage of the generous and distinguished persons like Sir Michael Sadler, Lady Carmichael, Sir Francis Youghusband, Lawrence Binyon he opened a branch of the Bratachari Society in London. In London he came across Late Gaikwad of Baroda (late prince of the now extinct state of Baroda, India), who was then taking holidays there. The prince was pleased to learn of the idea behind the Bratachari movement and invited Gurusaday with his party to make a demonstration of Bratachari Dance and other exhibits at Baroda. When he came back to India, Gurusaday honoured the invitation and then went on a tour with his party round Mysore, Hyderabad and other places. Everywhere they were given warm reception.

When he was the Secretary to the Ministry of Local Self-government, Bengal, he resigned from the service in December, 1940 owing to some difference of opinion.

In this year he purchased one hundred *bighas* of land in Thakurpukur area near Calcutta where he established "Bratacharigram". He presided over the 'Prabasi Banga Sahitay Sammelan' (1940) in Jamshedpur. His mission was to carry the Bratachari everywhere and uphold the folk culture of Bengal.

#### Honour

In appreciation of his valuable service to our racial culture, he was given a civic reception under the presidency of Dr. Shyamaprasad Mookherjee. Dr. Dineshchandra Sen was present at this meeting and enlisted himself as a member of the *Bengal Bratachari Society* on that day. Prior to his becoming a member, he was a sympathiser of the Society. The Corporation of Calcutta as a mark of respect to G. S. Dutt has named a road after him. He received a lot of honours from different organisations.

## Conclusion

Gurusaday Dutt was a poet and had an absorbing interest in literature. He composed rules of conduct in verses to be observed by the Bratacharis. His poetic compositions stir our national and humane feelings. A scintillating literary glow centered round him. He was also very fond of hunting.

Gurusaday Dutt was equally adept in English and Bengali compositions. He used to write in many a contemporary journals in addition to his own organs—"*Bangalar Sakti*" and "*Bangalakshmi*". When the draft of his work "The Folk Dances of Bengal" was nearly complete, he died on the 25th June, 1941 at his residence at Gurusaday Road, Calcutta. As a mark of respect, schools, colleges and the Corporation of Calcutta were closed. On the fourth day of his death, the then Sheriff of Calcutta called a condolence meeting on 29th July, 1941. In this meeting a Memorial Committee was formed with A. K. Fazlul Haq, the then Prime Minister of Bengal, as its Chairman, and other eminent people were on the Committee. The condolence resolution was moved by Saratchandra Bose and supported by Dr. Shyamaprasad Mookherjee.

We concur with Asok Mitra<sup>18</sup> who says, "Although the Bratachari Movement was life stuff of Gurusaday Dutt, he had as early as 1919 found other interests, and consuming passion for the native dance led him to discover how alive and interwinded folk culture was, how earthy it was of the earth, how the dance is inseparable from the song, the picture, the decoration, the way of life. Thus he arrived at a conclusion that style is not surface, but the whole way of life. His dream drove him to find beauty in common life, in the collection "trifled" that told a whole world in a grain of sand, told him how ruthlessly the "educated" mind was hastening the decay of an ancient culture, still rich and vibrant.

"Gurusaday Dutt was in the direct line of a series of learned, humane, and distinguished scholars. But that is not

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18. 'Preface' of the book entitled "*Folk Dances of Bengal*". published by the Bengal Bratachari Society, Calcutta.

enough to say of him. He was a rare scholar who stood out from the rest and a most thorough-going man in an all out investigation into the indigenous culture of our country and endeavoured to discover the mainspring or source of unity of our culture. While many other scholars, masters in their own fields, have merely discovered the courtly aspect of Indian culture, its formal pattern, or tried to assess whether Indian culture can take its rightful place among the cultures of ancient times of the West, Gurusaday Dutt did more fundamental work. He went to the heart of all cultures, the people themselves and their villages, and tried to unravel the sources of their creative activity. There he met the truth that man creates according to the laws of beauty."

### Bibliographical Notes

Gurusaday Dutt was an able field worker, collector, writer and organiser in one. His collections and writings appeared in the first-rate English and Bengali journals. A great many collections and creative writings of his appeared in his own journal—"Bangalakshmi" (This journal appeared as an organ of the Sarojnalini Narimangal Samittee in 1925) and "Banglar Sakti" (This journal appeared in 1943 B. S. and lasted for 14 full years up to 1356 B. S.). Besides, he contributed and sent messages and blessings to different organs of various branches of the Society spread throughout the country. Some unpublished manuscripts of [his, we are told, are also available. We list below some of the important works of Gurusaday for the benefit of the future researchers.

1920—*Bhajar banshi* (The flute of Bhaja—a collection of some nursery rhymes).

1920—A practical scheme for agricultural organisation and rural reconstruction in Bengal.

1925—Village reconstruction.

1925—*Sarojnalini*.

1925—*Palli Sanskar O Sangathan* (Rural reconstruction and organisation).

1926—*Gramer kajer ka kha ga oraphe Mohamudgar* (The ABC of Village Work).

1927—*Palli Sangathan* (Village organisation)

1929—A woman in India (The life sketch of Sarojnalini).

1931—*Galpe siban ba cutting shiksha* (Sewing and cutting teaching through stories).

1931—Indigenous Dances of Bengal (Census Report).

1931—*Ganer Saji* (Basketful of songs)

Songs composed for the Bratacharis.

1932—The Folk-art of Bengal, *Modern Review*, Calcutta.

1935—*Bratachari Sakha* (Friend of Bratachari)

1936—The living traditions of folk-art in Bengal, *Indian Art & Letters*, Calcutta.

1937—Bratachari Synthesis.

1939—Mask Dances of Bengal, *Modern Review*, Calcutta.

1939—*Patua Sangeet* (Songs of the Patua).

1940—*Bratachari Marmakatha* (Heart's secret of the Bratacharis).

1941—*Bratachari Parichaya* (The Introduction of the Bratacharis).

This is the last book written by him.

1954—Folk Dances of Bengal (The book appeared after the death of G. S. Dutt. Sri Asok Mitra, I. C. S. edited the book),

The following books are also written by him but the year of their publication could not be ascertained. The name of these books are collected from "*Bratachari Sathi*", Vol. I. No. 1 Guruji Smriti Sankha, ed. by Balaikrishna Gol, published by him from Chandannagore.

—*Japane Banganari* (Bengali woman in Japan)

—*Paglamir Punthi* (A book of the play the fool)

—*Puri Mahatmya* (The glory of Puri)

—*Goray Galad* (Fault at the start)

—Indian folkdance and folksong movement.

—The folk-art of Bengal

(The announcement of the publication of this book appeared in the back cover page of the book "Folk Dances of Bengal" where it was said it would shortly be out, but so far as the knowledge of the author goes, no such book has yet appeared).





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## KEDARNATH MAJUMDAR (1870—1926)

Today folk literature of Mymensingh has a world recognition. This literature would have pined away had not Kedarnath Majumdar made it known first through the medium of his magazine "Saurabh". He had a flair to pick up the right men of literary instinct and helped a host of budding writers of different calibres develop into full-fledged ones. Truly speaking, he did a commendable work by encouraging people for collecting folk literature and history of Bengal. His first successful attempt in this regard was *Mymansinger Viraran*" (1309 B.S.) and "*Mymansinger Itihas*" (1310 B.S.) "*Jangalbarir Itihas*" and "*Subarnagramer Itihas*" were his predecessors. They had treated the same path as Kedarnath, but Kedarnath advanced farther—his treatment of the subject was both original and comprehensive. He was bent upon collecting materials of history from the lores and traditions of each and every village of his native district and set about the movement for such collection in other districts too. It will not be an exaggeration if we say, "Mymensingh Gitika", owes its origin to Kedarnath. We know that at the instance of Kedarnath the poet Rajani Chaudhuri started contributing in "Arati" his memoirs of the village life. When Kedarnath was at Dacca conducting the "Dacca Review", he urged upon persons of literary taste to collect the folk songs and folk tales of Bengal, like—"Ghatu" songs, "Sari" songs, "Rakhalia" songs, "Paran-katha" (Grand-mother's tales) etc. In course of doing so, he found a treasure of literary possibility in Chandrakumar De and in this discourse will be seen how he guided him from his novitiate to the full stature of a mature writer.

*Folklorists of Bengal*



**Born 1870**

**Died 1928**

**Kedarnath Majumdar**



There cannot be any difference of opinion on the point that "Mymensingh Gitika" could not come into being unless the findings of Kedarnath were brought into play in it. Therefore if any credit is due to anybody for this collection besides the collector, it should primarily go to Kedarnath and then to D. C. Sen. Here we may point out incidentally that disowning any debt, be it material or abstract, is the common propensity of mankind. A partial recognition of debt is elicited only when it is forced by circumstances. Chandrakumar De whose name is associated with the fame of "Mymensingh Gitika" wrote on the death of Kedarnath in an article entitled "Smriti Tarpan"<sup>1</sup> (meaning 'in memorium'), "it was he who apprised me of the "Bhehua" song. He helped me with a letter of introduction to Late Ramnath Chakrabarti to whom I went for "Baromasi song of Lila." (Literal translation of Bengali text).

He had a keen interest in moulding literary men out of lads of promise and a solicitude for preserving country literature. These youngmen served their apprenticeship in "Saurabh". They tried their hands at the journal till they could find their way into reputed magazines of Calcutta and establish themselves in their respective fields. These followers were his fair-weather friends who were of no avail in times of need. This fact is illustrated in a statement of Chandrakumar De, who in his guilty conscience said, "I admit in all humility that I had been an ungrateful creature to him and had been so for reasons of privation and other factors."<sup>2</sup> But Kedarnath did not entertain bitter feelings against him.

Charuchandra Bandyopadhyay, wrote to say, "that in pursuance of my proposal, 'Mymensingh Gitika' was included in the syllabus of study for the M.A. course in Bengali of the Calcutta University and I was put in charge of lecturing on it. Then I had to go through his (Kedarnath's) works and personally discussed with him

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1. Saurabh, Vol. 14, Kedar Smriti Sankhya, 1333 B. S.

2. Ibid.

on points of information. To my surprise he pointed out some errors committed by Dineschandra Sen<sup>3</sup> in his works." (Literal translation of Bengali text). This self-made man who was not a degree-holder of a University rose to such a height of knowledge that he could point out the errors of Dineschandra Sen of established fame.

His scope of scholarship embraced both the ancient and the then modern literatures of Bengal. His self-taught attainments in Hindu scriptures are still rare to be found among those who have public education and not been taught in a "Tol" (school where Sanskrit and scriptures in Sanskrit are taught). To all appearance, he was not courteous. But one must be closely associated with him before he could discern in him a humourist in whom has been combined the juvenile simplicity, youthful joviality and sagacity of the old.

Bengali was his mother tongue and he was engaged in fruitful researches in Bengali literature. We believe that if any talented person of Bengal can take upon himself the task of translating his four works into English,<sup>4</sup> he will be doing a service to Bengal and its literature.

#### Childhood

Kedarnath was born in the village Gachihata, in Kishoreganj Sub-division in Mymensing in 1276 B.S. (1870). His parents were not well off. He lost his father when he was a youth. Kedarnath had a younger brother. Poverty was the constant companion of his boyhood. Doggedly pursued by poverty and privation, he gave up his study in his teens and was out for earning bread. When Kedarnath was well off he never forgot his past sufferings. Even at the time when his reputation went far and wide he was not easy with his pecuniary circumstances. He decided upon

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3. With due apology to the revered memory of Dineschandra Sen we remind the readers that his casual mistakes fade into insignificance when we consider his great and original contribution to Bengali literature.

4. *Ramayani Samaj, Mymensingher Itihas and others.*

publishing text books which were likely to fetch easy money. But his friends and admirers persuaded him to give over this course.

#### Career

At the age of seventeen in 1294 B. S. Kedarnath started his career as the Assistant Editor of "Kumar", a Bengali monthly magazine. In 1307 B. S. when he was thirty, Woopendrachandra Roy and Rajanikanta Pandit brought out "Arati" of which Kedarnath was the nucleus. Then came Woomeshchandra Vidyaratna. Subsequently, Kedarnath succeeded Woopendrachandra and became the Editor of "Arati". "Saurabh" was his own monthly magazine which came into being in Magh, 1318 B. S. (January-February). As the name of the periodical indicates, like perfume of a nosegay this periodical "Saurabh" had been a beloved possession of readers of those days. This "Saurabh" has left an indelible mark in the history of journalism in Bengal and will ever be remembered along with its maestro Kedarnath Majumdar.

#### Education

Kedarnath read up to the Entrance standard. In his later life he mastered Sanskrit and acquired a fair knowledge in English. He had no teacher nor had any instruction from anybody and voraciously read books after books on different subjects. His perspicacity and perseverance had the desired result. In course of time he came to be ranked as one among the learned men of his time.<sup>5</sup> He mastered "Vedas", "Upanisads", "Purans", "Smriti", "Sruti", "Upapurana" and history. He did it with so much confidence that once he casually told his friend Purnachandra Bhattacharyya, "Now I am in a position to

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5. "Once I called on Haraprasad Sastri, Professor of Dacca University, for a knotty matter sought to be explained by him. Professor Sastri had a high estimation of Kedarnath and he told me that I had not necessarily to seek his advice. I had better consult Kedarnath of East

debate with 'Smarta' Pandits (scholars expert in social laws) on moot points."

#### Research

After he had worked off "Ramavani Samaj", a critical study of the social structure as illustrated in the "Ramayana", he wished to set his hands to the "Mahabharata". He also wanted to make the English rendering of his historical works but it was not fulfilled. His historical work "Mymensingher Itihas" (History of Mymensingh) is eloquent of his dexterity in deciphering from decaying *punthis*<sup>6</sup> and his talent for fishing out the significant from unintelligible texts. We cannot extol him too much for this work. This is now regarded as an original contribution to the historical study.

It goes to his credit to have ably conducted and maintained regular issues when a considerable number of monthly magazines of Calcutta had ephemeral life. It may be noted that even Rabindranath Tagore had six abortive attempts at instituting monthly magazines. In this connection we would like to bring into picture the journal "Bandhab" that was published by Kaliprasanna Ghosh from Dacca (now Eastern Pakistan) with a spirit of rivalry with "Bangadarsan" of Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya published from Calcutta. Kaliprasanna Ghose had the wisdom to pick up those compositions that were rejected by Calcutta magazines of fame. He himself made patch work with and moulded those writings to give them

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Bengal, an authority on the subject". (Surendramohan Bhattacharyya Vedanta-Sastri-Sankhya-Puran-Kavya-Byakaran-Tirtha).

and

"Mymensingh Gitika" having been selected for the M. A. course in the Modern Indian languages in the Calcutta University, I consulted Kedarnath who furnished me with many facts and figures relating to this Book." (Prof. Charuchandra Bandyopadhyay).

6. In olden days when paper was unknown palm leaves were cut and trimmed to rectangular sheets on which texts were written with a stylus type of pen.

a presentable form. "Saurabh" had the purpose identical with "Bandhab". Prior to "Saurabh" made its debut "Bangadarshan", "Arya Darshan" and "Bandhab" went out of existence. "Bina" another Bengali Journal was defunct long before. Kedarnath accommodated in his "Saurabh" both the beginners and writers of standing who had met with refusal elsewhere.

It is to be noted that a fairly large number of worthy articles of "Saurabh" were reprinted in some reputed monthly magazines of Calcutta like 'Prabasi', "Bharat-barsha", "Bharati", "Bharat Mahila" "Manasi-O-Marmabani" "Sikshasamachar", etc: This has admittedly added to the honour and status of the editor of "Saurabh".

Kedarnath was a researcher, historian, journalist and a writer in one. He used to contribute his articles to different periodicals of his time. The following books of Kedarnath are important. Available bibliographical notes of Kedarnath are given at the last portion of this essay.

#### (A) Historical works—

(1) *Mymansingher Vivaran*, (2) *Mymansingher Itihas*, (3) *Dhaccar Vivaram*, (4) *Ramayani Samaj* (Posthumous publication), (5) *Samaik Sahitya*.

#### (B) Fictions and sundry works—

(1) *Samasya*, (2) *Subhadristi*, (3) *Sneher Dan*, (4) *Sroter Phul*.<sup>7</sup>

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7. When River "Daulat Khan" of East Bengal was in spate he wrote a fiction entitled "Praphulla" taking as its plot the woes of 'Bharar Meye' (There was an evil custom in East Bengal in remote past. It was that girls were abducted from far-off regions, carried in boats over to East Bengal and sold as commodities. These girls were popularly known as 'Bharar Meye' (Bhar means cargo boat). This title "Praphulla" was changed to 'Sroter Phul' when the fiction was brought out. For this new name he was in debt to Charuchandra Bandyopadhyaya. Charu Babu wrote : "বেদীনীপুর সাহিত্য-সম্মিলনে তাঁর সঙ্গে আমার সাক্ষাৎ হয়। তিনি নিজের নিজের পরিচয় দিয়ে আমার বললেন—“আপনার বইয়ের ‘স্রোতের ফুল’ নামটা আমার বড় ভালো লেগেছিল, তাই আমি ওটা আপনাকে না বলেই গ্রহণ করেছি”। (সৌরভ, কেদার ন্যূতি সংখ্যা)।



Of all these published works, "Ramayani Samaj", "Mymensingher Itihas", "Bangla Samayik Sahitya" have been standing landmarks in Bengali literature. 'Ramayani Samaj' is the best contribution of his mature brain and is a result of 20 years' research work. He did not live to see it (Ramayani Samaj) brought out in printed form. In the introductory note to this book Mahamohapadhyay Haraprasad Sastri wrote—"I declare in unqualified terms that I have been charmed with the perseverance, endurance and above all with his erudition" (translation from the Bengali text).

Kedarnath was the mainspring of all cultural activities of his days in Mymensingh. He built up a literary society in Mymensingh. He was the chief organiser of the Conference of literary men which was held in 1318 B. S. Exhibits of archaeological interest assembled there highly impressed the delegates at the Conference. "Sahitya Sammelan" of Kishorganj, "Purnima Sammelani" of Gouripur, "Trayodasi Samitee" of Muktagacha, "Sahitya Sabha" of Jamalpur, "Sahitya Sangha" of Tangail, "Purnima Sammilani" of Netrakona, "Tarun Samiti" of the youngmen of Mymensingh, "Pallishri", a short-lived journal of Mymensingh—all these cultural organisations owed their incentive to the patronising zeal of Kedarnath. He founded after the name of his mother a High English school at his native village which had to be closed down on account of Non-Cooperation Movement then sweeping over Bengal. There are innumerable examples of his constructive ability and how he inspired men in the making and did not leave them in mid-stream. By way of an example, let us take the following observation of Chandrakumar De again,—"I made my debut in writing in 'Saurabh'. I sent to 'Saurabh' three poems which were rejected. ...Some days later the editor wrote to me—"How is it, you appear to be disheartened?" I was till then a stranger to him. Again I took up my pen. I compiled the songs of the womenfolk of Mymensingh, which met the same fate. Then I decided not to make an attempt at writing in my life. After a suspense of a fortnight the editor wrote to me—"Please see me personally". In this way he moulded

his men to his liking and helped to develop latent faculty in them. A deep sense of regard to Kedarnath rang in the following panegyric of Chandrakumar De : "Kedarnath is a colossus of learning, which does not require substantiation. The sky over Mymensingh, the air of Mymensingh, River Brahmaputra will sing in a chorus to the praise of his achievements. The symphony of the song will be echoed by Garo Hills. I have grown old and invalid and as long as I live I should enshrine him in my bosom and worship him as an idol conceived after the statue of Zeus sculptured by the Greek sculptor *Phudius*. I would raise my voice of prayer and would say—'Oh my god, Oh my father, whither hast thou gone ? Hear me'. "An ungrateful creature and villain as I am, I giveth thou my offering of tears, which mayest ye accept and forgive me". (A literal translation of the Bengali text into English.) The above lines are enough to show how sincere and unfathomable regard this disciple entertained for his preceptor.

His married daughter Arati Debi died a premature death in 1905 in her youth. Before his daughter died he had grieved over the death of his son Saurabh. He loved his magazine so much that he named his son after the name of the magazine. His bereavement kept him morose all along.

#### Conclusion

He dedicated his life to the cause of cultural upliftment of Mymensingh and "Saurabh" was his organ. But Mymensingh people were not forward enough to feel the utility and take the service of such an organ. Their neglectful attitude towards "Saurabh" pained him. In a spirit of sorrow and despair often he said—"It has been difficult now to run this paper. Not a few educated and well-to-do persons subscribed to it regularly at the first instance, but few days later, their zeal died down and they do not now accept V. P. Parcels and cause considerable loss to my establishment. They

become spend-thrift about frivolous affairs and gladly squander away money, say, Rs. 2000/- per year. But on the contrary, they become scrupulous about spending Rs. 2/- per year for this magazine." (Literal translation of the Bengali text).

Kedarnath gathered up enough reputation during his life time. He had to do an uphill task before he could take his place among distinguished persons. He had to pass through many ordeals and had the deserts he deserved.

Most of his articles were published in "Saurabh", "Arya-barta" and "Bharat Mahila", edited respectively by Suresh Samajpati, Hemendraprasad Ghosh and Sarajubala Datta. After finishing "Ramayani Samaj" he collected notes for a work of connotation of "Ramyani Sabhyata," (Civilisations in the days of the Ramayan). But before his completing the work he died in 1333 B. S. (1926).

We conclude by pointing out that the eminence of Kedarnath is due to : (1) His magazine "Saurabh", (2) His discovery of Chandrakumar De, (3) His historical and literary research works. And for this the Bar library of Kishoreganj adopted the following resolution on his death : "Resolved unanimously that this meeting expresses its deep sorrow at the sudden and premature death of Babu Kedarnath Majumdar of Gachihata, Editor of the 'Saurabh' and the author of the History of Mymensingh and other Bengali books. This meeting offers sincere condolence to his bereaved family."

Kedarnath Majumdar was also a member of the Royal Asiatic Society. While writing text books for the students of minor classes, he used the title M. R. A. S. He has a number of books on geography and published two volumes of atlas (1) *Mymensing Manchitra* (Atlas of Mymensing), (2) *Dacca Manchitra* (Atlas of Dacca). This speaks of his sound knowledge in the local geography. Almost all his text books were confined to the perspective of Dacca and Mymensingh. Both these two districts were most intimate to him. Dacca was the place of his youth where he started his career and Mymensingh was his birth-place where he

passed his days till he breathed his last. So it can be safely said that Kedarnath did not write anything without knowing the subject well and it is striking trait of his character. Kedarnath also wrote some short stories and has two novels to his credit. His writings on history and ancient literature were highly praised and appreciated by the scholarly circles. This amply proves of his versatility.

Kedarnath inspired his followers and even his relatives to collect folkloristic materials.\* His nearest relative Jatindranath Majumdar, a close friend of Chandrakumar De, also did enough at the instance of Kedarnath and Chandrakumar. Jatindranath Majumdar had collected and published plenty of materials on folk literature of Bengal. Dr. Srikumar Banerjee, Annadashankar Ray<sup>8</sup> etc. praised Jatindranath Majumdar for his work. Having the news of the death of Jatindranath in 1952, Annadashankar Ray wrote a letter to Jogindranath Majumdar, the only son of Jatindranath, saying that the death of his father is a great loss to the Folklorists of Bengal. Smt. Lila Ray, wife of Annadashankar, wrote an obituary in the organ of the Indian P. E. N. about Jatindranath. Jatindranath was a brother of the renowned artist Hemendranath Majumdar. Kedarnath had ultimately raised himself to such a standard that the relatives and people who neglected him in his childhood and even in his youth, were tempted to refer to Kedarnath in future. This self-made and sickly man will ever be remembered for his vigour, strength of mind and tenacity. His life is an example to us how enthusiasm and firm belief in a cause inspire to explore the unknown frontiers.

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\* Chandrakumar De wrote : যে সময়সিংহের চাষার গানগুলি আজ সাত সপ্তক পার হইয়া দূর ইয়োরোপ আমেরিকায় এখন সম্মানিত আসনটি অধিকার করিয়া লইতে সক্ষম হইয়াছে, তাহার মূলে কেশবনাথের প্রাচীন সাহিত্যভ্রমণ। তিনি 'সৌরভে' ভ্রাহার সম্মান না দিলে আরো তাহা লোকচক্ষুর সম্মুখে ধরা দিত না। (Saurabh, Kedar Memorial Number)

8. The author had the opportunity to look into the letter referred to from Jogindranath Majumdar, M.A., Sodepur, 24-Parganas where he went to verify the information.

## Bibliographical Notes

Kedarnath Majumdar has written a number of books both for the students and non-students. He has also written a great many articles, reviews etc. in his own journal and in others like *Prabasi*, *Bharatbarsa* etc. Some of his writings in 'Saurabh' were even reproduced in some Calcutta periodicals. All these articles are in Bengali. We list below some of his books available at the National Library, Calcutta, and Bangiya Sahitya Parishat Library, Calcutta, as a primary information :

—*Mymensingh Vivaran* (Socio-geographical work on Mymensingh)

1906—*Chitra* (Novel)

—*Mymensingher Itihas* (Socio-cultural history of Mymensingh)

1908—*Gadya Sahitya* (Prose literature)

1908—*Mymensingh Sahachar* (School text book)

1910—*Dacca Vivaran* (Description of Dacca)

1917—*Bangla Samayik Sahitya* (Contemporary literature of Bengal)

1923—*Subhadristi* (fiction—Social Novel)

1924—*Samasya* (fiction—Social Novel)

1927—*Ramayaner Samaj* (Posthumous publication) "Prabasi" writes "Those who want to know India during the days of the Ramayana it is 'a must' for them."

—*Dacca Sahachar* (Approved by D. P. I. Bengal for class II, 2nd. edn., D/D size, p.p. 1-32, Price As. /2/-

—*Purbabangla O Assam Sahachar* (Approved by D.P.I., Bengal for class III, 3rd. edn. D/D Size, pp. 1-52+1.+1., Price As. /3/-

—*Saraswat Kunja* (History of Bengali Prose)

—*Sneherdhan* (fiction)

—*Bhugal Shiksha* (Geography teaching, School text book)

—*Sroter Phul* (fiction—Social Novel, Price Re. 1/4 as.)

Sri Woomeshechandra Bhattacharjee wrote on the 10th Jaistha, 1333 B.S.

“কেন্দার বাবুর সাহিত্য চেষ্টার পরিপূর্ণ ফল্য নির্ধারণ করার সময় এখন নয়। তবে সেটি যে সামান্য নয়, তাহা সকলেই জানেন। কিন্তু এই সাহিত্য সৃষ্টির চেয়েও কোন অংশ কম নয়, এমন আরও ছোট বহু কাজ তিনি করিয়া গিয়াছেন—একটি হইল, ময়মনসিংহের সর্বানদের মধ্যে একটা সাহিত্য চেষ্টা আগাইয়া বেওয়া; আর একটি হইল ময়মনসিংহ-ঐতিহ্যের আবিষ্কার বাধা দিয়া আজকাল এত হৈ চৈ চলিতেছে।” (Saurabh, Kedar Memorial Number).



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## CHANDRAKUMAR DE

(1881—1946)

It is noteworthy that poetic vein has been now-a-days on the wane under the influence of this mechanical age when all attention has been directed to the development of sciences, scientific literatures, philosophy, history, economics, politics, geography, arts and crafts. The inevitable result is that once sovereign poet takes now a back seat because modern sciences have pricked the bubble and taken out the bloom from the illusion and mystification of poetry from which the poet made his capital. The poet can not make much headway, it is supposed, against the scorching influence of science. To make this statement we quote the authority like Mecauly who said, "as the magic lantern acts best in a dark room, poetry effects its purpose most completely in a dark age." An emotional mental constitution free from sophistry favours the art of poetry. In olden days the unlettered common people regaled with ballads composed and set to tune and rhythm by country singers and bards. Those who have the experience of listening to "Palagan" (a kind of grand opera in which ballads are sung throughout) from the lips of *gayan's* (bards) must admit that a mere reading or recitation of those ballads will not exhaust the exposition of the ballads, as in that case the symphony, melody and the true spirit conjured up by the bards will be missing.

A frequent caller at recitals of these "Palagan" was a rustic youngman of small education who read up to seventh standard of secondary education. The motifs of these ballads took root in his receptive young mind which was predisposed with poetic instinct and virgin innocence. He

*Folklorists of Bengal*



**Born 1881**

**Chandrakumar De**

**Died 1945**





was Chandrakumar De of the village of 'Aithor' in the district of Mymensingh (now in E. Pakistan). Though his academic equipment was very poor, his name went far and wide as an arduous collector of folksongs. Here it should be noted that had it not been for the guidance and encouragement from Kedarnath Majumdar<sup>1</sup>, editor of the then journal "Saurabh", and all possible help and sympathy of the distinguished scholar Dineschandra Sen who picked him out for the compilation of "Maiman-sinha-gitika", he would have withered away like a wild shrub unnoticed and unheard. It goes without saying that we too had not had the opportunity to speak of Chandrakumar De. But things were otherwise ordained. He had latent faculties. This diligent youngman whipped up his energies to make up for his academic shortcomings so that he could adjust himself with and go abreast of the learned persons and connoisseurs of his time. He made himself equal to the difficult task of collection and selection of the ballads which called for special aptitude. His contribution to Bengali literature was highly appreciated in learned circles so much so that he was honoured with a civic reception on 5th September, 1938 under the presidency of renowned and learned physician, Dr. Nilratan Sarkar, then ranking highest in medical profession and also noted for social service. An English rendering of the address from the original Bengali text is reproduced in toto which runs as follows : (Bengali text is appeared in the footnote)

"To

Chandrakumar De,

the untiring patriot who dedicated himself  
to the service of motherland.

Sir,

The treasure-trove you have unearthed has enhanced the prestige of the Bengali literature both in our country

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1. In later years there developed some differences between Chandrakumar and Kedarnath, which was ultimately composed.

and abroad. The people of Bengal were unaware of such rare specimens of poetic literature that lay hidden in the remotest hamlet of East Bengal. These effulgent gems of ballads have set off our Bengali literature and added to it an exquisite beauty. You have thrown new light on the store of our national literature and have held us up in a grip of wonder and made us spell-bound. Your unparalleled competency, burning patriotism and continued perseverance were at work to unfold those folk ballads which the world-famous master minds like Sylvan Levi, Romain Roland, Sir George Grierson and so forth so much acclaimed. In appreciation of your diligence, spirit of selfless service and other virtues, we have convened this meeting in order to deliver at your hands this address, the token of our goodwill for you. We hope, you would make us happy by very kindly accepting it.

On behalf of your compatriots,  
Sri Nilratan Sarkar,  
President."

Chandrakumar's firstlings of collection were the folk-songs called "Mahuya". He chanced to hear "Mahuya"

2. ময়মনসিংহের গাথা সাহিত্যের পূজক দেশমাতৃকার অক্লান্ত সেবক শ্রীযুক্ত চন্দ্রকুমার দে মহাশয়ের করকমলে—

মহাশয়,

আপনি আপনার জন্মভূমির যে রত্নখনির পরিচয় দিয়াছেন তাহাতে দেশে বিদেশে বঙ্গ-সাহিত্যের গৌরব বর্ধিত হইয়াছে। পূর্ববঙ্গের নিহৃত পন্নী নিকেতনে যে এতাদৃশ অসাধারণ কাব্য সাহিত্য লুক্কায়িত ছিল তাহা বঙ্গবাসীরা জানিতেন না। এই গীতি রত্নখনির দ্বারা বঙ্গসাহিত্য নবজীবিত হইয়া উজ্জ্বলতর হইয়াছে। আপনি জাতীয় সাহিত্যের ভাণ্ডারে নূতন আলোকপাত করিয়া এদেশের সাহিত্যিকগণকে বিম্বিতাধিত ও মুগ্ধ করিয়াছেন। মহামাত্ত সিলভেন লিভি, রোমান রোল, স্যার জর্জ গ্রিয়ার্সন প্রভৃতি জগদ্ধিখ্যাত পণ্ডিতগণ যে সমস্ত পন্নীগাথার এত প্রশংসা করিয়াছেন তাহার আবিষ্কারের মূলে আপনার অসাধারণ কর্মঠতা, দেশপ্রীতি ও অক্লান্ত অধ্যাবসার। আমরা আপনার নিঃস্বার্থ পরিশ্রম ও নানাবিধ সদৃশপের পক্ষপাতী হইয়া অত্যন্ত এই সমস্ত আত্মানুর্ভূতক আমাদের আন্তরিক প্রীতি নির্দশনবস্ত্র এই অভিনন্দন পত্রখানি প্রদান করিতেছি। আশাকরি ইহা গ্রহণ করিয়া আমাদেরকে হৃদয় করিবেন।

আপনার বশেষীয়গণের পক্ষে—

শ্রীনিরতন সরকার, সভাপতি।

from the lips of some Mahommedan farmer of a village named "Mauska". These songs caught his imagination and made him all agog for their collection. These collections were first published in the magazine "Saurabh" and later caught the discerning eyes of Dineschandra Sen, who in his turn apprised Sir Asutosh Mukherjee, the then defacto potentate of the University of Calcutta, of the ballads fraught with abundance of rich literary materials.

#### Childhood

Chandrakumar De was born in 1288 B. S. (1881) in the village of 'Aithor' in the district of Mymensingh (Eastern Pakistan). His father Ramkumar De had hailed from their ancestral village of 'Raghabpur' in the same district and settled down in the village of 'Aithor'. A man of slender income, Ramkumar suffered from privation. So, it was beyond his means to meet the expenses towards the education of his son Chundrakumar. Destitution of Ramkumar did not allow Chandrakumar to prosecute his studies further. Moreover, educational facilities in those days were not so much widespread in India as they are now.

It was unfortunate that Chandrakumar lost his mother (whose name was Kusumkamini) in his childhood when the tending of the child devolved upon his widowed grandmother (mother of his mother) who too was bereft of her husband at her young age.

#### Career

Ramkumar was never too pleased with his son Chandrakumar. As he was poverty-stricken and Chandrakumar his only son, he wanted that his son should give up the profession of a vagrant, roving from place to place and collecting, what appeared to him useless, folksongs. He expected that his son should rather stay at home and do as the common run of the Bengalee gentry would do—to

find some official service, to make a pretty good income, to get himself married. Ramkumar did not, of course, expect too much of his son but reckoned upon him for a day when they would be of easy circumstances.

Now the father of Chandrakumar believed that his only son had spolt his career by hobnobbing with the peasants. At times, in an outburst of his petulance he used to tear off or burn away his note-book containing collection of folksongs and "Palagans". But this sort of outrageous conduct could not counteract his son's passionate occupation of collecting folksongs. His father had to live from hand to mouth. He could not lay by anything. So when his father died, Chandrakumar had to borrow money to meet the expenses for the funeral rites.

### Marriage

In 1902 on the solicitation of his father and grandmother Chandrakumar took to wife Kusumkumari, then a girl of thirteen, of the village of 'Majhiura' under P. S. Kendua in his native district.

### Service

On the death of his father he felt stranded and took service with 'Kalipur' estate (Mymensingh) on a paltry salary Rupees Two per month.<sup>3</sup> His post was that of a

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3. Chandrakumar writes "সর্বপ্রথম আমি সৌরভে তিনটি কবিতা পাঠাই। তিনটিই অমনোনীত হয়। আমি হাত গুটাইয়া বসি। দুইটাকা বেতনের সামান্ত একজন তালুকদারের পাটোয়ারীর পক্ষে এটা বে কেবলই বিড়ম্বনা, তাহা বেশ বুঝিতে পারিয়া নিরন্ত হই। কিছুদিন পরে কেদারবাবু চিঠি পাই—একেবারে নিবিয়া গেলে কেন, তখন তাঁহার সঙ্গে আমার আলাপ পরিচয় কিছুই নাই। আমার লিখিতে আরম্ভ করি। বেশ মনে আছে সেটা ময়মনসিংহের মেয়েলী সজীত। তাহাও অমনোনীত হইয়া কিরিয়া আসে। তখন উহা ছিঁড়িয়া কেলিয়া প্রতিজ্ঞা করি, জীবনে আর কলম ধরিব না। দিন পনর পর চিঠি পাইলাম—'তুমি আমার সঙ্গে দেখা কর...' তিনি দিন চার পাঁচ আমাকে তাঁর বাসার রাখিয়া প্রবন্ধ লিখিবার প্রশংসা ও দোষগুণ দিকা দিলেন। এইরূপে নিজ শক্তি ও বহু অর্থ অপব্যবহার করিয়াছেন,...এই সকল নতুন লেখকদের অধিকাংশই কালে সৌরভ ছাড়াইয়া রাজধানীর (কলিকাতা) পত্রিকা ধরিয়া প্রতিষ্ঠাবান হইতে চেষ্টা করিয়াছেন।...পেটের দ্বারে অথবা অন্ত কারণে আমিও বঁ অকৃতজ্ঞ নিষকহারাম হইয়াছিলাম তাহা অবনত মস্তকে স্বীকার করি।" ('সৌরভ', কেদার শ্রুতি সংখা)।

'Gomasta' (rent-collector). He had to travel from village to village collecting rents from the tenants. To him this peripatetic duty was a blessing in disguise—it provided for his mental pabulum. As a rent-collector he had to approach the peasants of different bents of mind. On a close association he developed cordiality with them. The more he came in touch with them, the greater was his opportunity to secure folksongs, more folksongs, from them. Now he tried his hand at writing in journals and offered "Mahuya" for publication in the magazine "Saurabh."<sup>4</sup> The perspicacious editor of "Saurabh" appreciated and accepted "Mahuya" with alacrity. Since then "Saurabh" stood him in good stead by publishing the bulk of his collection of folksongs. Gradually, high value was set upon his collections when Calcutta's leading Bengali monthlies like "Prabasi", "Bharatbarsha" and others published them. As has been said in a foregone paragraph,

4. Chandrakumar first collected the following ballad from a Muslim peasant which appeared in 'Saurabh'. Dineshchandra did not miss to go through it. Noticing the nicety of the ballad he enquired about the collector and was successful to find him out and send him to the unexplored field for collecting such materials and as a result of this endeavour "Eastern Bengal Ballads" made its debut. Here is the ballad :

লজ্জা নাইরে নিলজ্জা কুমার  
লজ্জা নাই কি তর ।  
গলাতে কলসী বাইন্ধ্যা  
জলে ডুইব্যা মর ।  
কই পাইয়াম কলসী কইন্যা  
কই পাইয়াম দরি । ( দড়ি )  
তুমি অণু গহিন গাঙ,  
আমি ডুইব্যা মরি ।

"It is necessary to mention, with deep respect and admiration, the name of Chandrakumar De, who is the real discoverer of this neglected and nearly forgotten branch of Bengali literature (ballads). It was he whose article published in the Mymensingh journal 'Saurabh', attracted the attraction of Dr. D.C. Sen to the ballads, it was he who rescued these songs, literary at the last minute, from the threat of oblivion. Let us hope his merits will be acknowledged by his own countrymen too, which so far has not been done." ( D. Zbavitel : Introduction : Bengali folk-ballads from Mymensingh, pp. x ).

Dineschandra's eyes fell on him. He picked him out and had him appointed a collector of folksongs on behalf of the University of Calcutta on a monthly emolument of Rs. 70 (according to the standard of living then prevailing, a fair sum). This appointment was much to his liking. He gave up his service with the estate and wholeheartedly accepted this appointment, which was obviously more dignified and would give him more scope to have his own way.

### Research

Inestimable were the hardships of Chandrakumar to secure the folk ballads of Mymensingh. Once it so happened that he went insane for too much mental and physical strain. He was all along of delicate health and sickly. He roamed from village to village, lodged with the nomads, heard their full-throated songs and romantic tales and took notes of them. He ignored sun and rain and joined with them in their open-air festivity. For him a square meal was more scarce than regular. He had to procure those materials under trying conditions. As regards the ballads collected by him, Lord Ronaldsday wrote as follows in the January-March 1924 issue of the magazine *Orientalist* :

"The words of the ballads have been taken down in writing from the lips of those who sing them, by one Chandrakumar De, who have travelled into many out-of-the way places in East Bengal for the purpose. It was an extremely difficult task to which he set himself; he often found the professional singers whom he approached, unwilling to relate to a stranger the text of these songs, which had been handed to them as a private family possession; to recover the whole of a ballad he often had to make special journeys to several different places and to consult a number of different singers ;

and throughout his work he was handicapped by ill health."<sup>5</sup>

We understand that he had essayed a comprehensive task and encountered enormous difficulties in securing materials for the compilation of worthy "Maimensinhangitika".<sup>6</sup> This 'Gitika' was translated into English under the title "Eastern Bengal Ballads", the Foreword of which was written by Lord Ronaldsday.

These ballads belong entirely to the soil of Bengal and has not the least of foreign flavour. In distant ages amidst the surroundings of green foliage—verdancy being the special feature of our riverine Bengal—ruffled by zephyrous breeze, these ballads came natural to the country bards, who used to sing them to the accompaniment of bamboo flute and delighted the listeners. These vanishing ballads have been arrested and again been resonant in the "Gitikas" reclaimed by Chandrakumar. These unlettered bards had no pretension to pedantry, nor had they any smattering of rhetoric and prosody. But poetry oozed out of their hearts from natural impulses.

As Chandrakumar had no issues he adopted as his son a boy named Binaykumar, the second son of Sureshchandra Sarkar, a friend from his boyhood, on 24th Falgoun, 1339 B. S. Besides, he brought up a daughter of Parasuram De of the same village, who was in extreme poverty.

In addition to the collection of ballads, Chandrakumar set his hands to "Bratakatha" (story of rituals), "Rupkatha" (story like fairy tales), "Upakatha" (folk legends), which were published in a book form in Bengali in his work

5. Quotation from the materials supplied to the author by Sri Pradipkumar De, the grandson of Chandrakumar.

6. When 'Maimensinhangitika' was brought out it was acclaimed from all quarters. In a letter to Dineshchandra Sen Rabindranath said—  
বাংলা প্রাচীন মঙ্গলকাব্য প্রভৃতি কাব্যগুলি ধনীদের করমাসে ও খরচে খনন করা পুঙ্খলিপি; কিন্তু 'ময়মনসিংহ গীতিকার' বাংলা পল্লী জীবনের গভীর স্তর থেকে যেতে উচ্ছসিত উৎস অকৃত্রিম বেদনার বহন ধার। বাংলা সাহিত্যে এমন আত্মবিশ্বস্ত রস স্রষ্টা আর হয় নি। এই আত্মবিশ্বস্তির জন্ত আপনি যত । "(Letter to Dineshchandra Sen from Mangpu, Bijaya Dashami. 1346 B.S. quoted from "Banglar Puranari.")



"Tripatra." He did not lay down his pen till the last day of his life. He left behind some unpublished compositions and collections, which we have come to know from his grandson, Pradipkumar De<sup>7</sup>, out of which the poetic works 'Lohar Manjush,' "Satittwer Jamakharach" and drama "Gorakshanath" are noteworthy. His last contribution, I am told by his grandsons is the work "Satittwer Jamakharach."

#### Editor

Chandrakumar was the editor of a monthly magazine "Mahabharati" used to be published from his native village of Aithor. In this journal the 'Palagan' of 'Mahuya' was published serially under the title "Luter Manik" in drama form. This journal ceased to function later on.

#### Conclusion

Chandrakumar De came from the folk stock and with the help of Kedarnath he developed the taste and became conscious of their culture. He was fortunate enough to have first Kedarnath, then Dr. D. C. Sen and others as his patrons for his service to the collection of folk ballads. Had he not been able to collect the ballads of Mymensingh so efficiently, it would not have been possible to bring it to the limelight of the ballad literature of the world.

Chandrakumar was not happy with his family. In his boyhood he was tortured by his father. As a grown up youngman, he was sent to field work, for which he could not pay the desired attention to the family. He loved his wife dearly but as they had no children, from time to time

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7. Pradipkumar De writes to the author—"লোহার মঞ্জুস" ও "সতীত্বের জমাখরচ" নামক দুটি কাব্যগ্রন্থ এবং "গোরক্শনাথ" নামক একটি নাটক এখনও প্রকাশিত হয় নাই। "গোরক্শনাথ" নাটকটির পাণ্ডুলিপি বর্তমানে আমাদের কাছে আছে। বাকীগুলো পাকিস্তানের আমার স্বাভাবিকের কাছে আছে। ডা হাড়া অনেক গল্প, প্রবন্ধ এবং পল্লীগীতির পাণ্ডুলিপিও সেখানে আছে। কী ভাবে ওগুলো এখানে নিয়ে আসা যায়, বর্তমানে তাই ভাবছি (dated, Bhilai, 21.9. 1962)।

the couple entered into unhappy quarrels. Chandrakumar had a great many friends of whom Jatindranath Majumdar<sup>8</sup> was one who knew some secrets of Chandrakumar and this two friend has a group photo.<sup>9</sup> When Chandrakumar was sanguine of not having a child, he adopted a boy, of whom mention had already been made. During his life time Chandrakumar faced critics about the authenticity of the ballads collected by him. Chandrakumar never entered into the battle of the critics or had shown any interest in proving the authenticity of his collection. He all along said, "The truth will remain". This great conviction of his has proved later to be true. Recently the renowned Indologist, Dr. Dusan Zbavitel tried to prove once again the authenticity<sup>10</sup> of the ballads collected by Chandrakumar and others.

Although Chandrakumar adopted a son, he was not happy during his last days. He was living in Calcutta but being dissatisfied with the family-life he went back to his native village where he breathed his last.

This is an ample proof that Chandrakumar was an unfortunate man all through his life. Although he was very courteous, gentle and good-mannered with the people in general he was vain-glorious with the members of his family. This led to some unhappy incidents. His struggle for existence and tormenting life ultimately made him insane for sometime. He came to this world to work hard and when the work of his was finished, he heard the sound of the bell of the heaven.

8. Besides, he took the help of Sureshranjan Sarkar, Sachindrachandra De, Nagendrachandra De, Surendra Sarkar Ramkumar Mistry, Ramnath Chakravarty and his adopted son Benaykumar De.

9. The photo have appeared in this book is taken from this group photo. This photo was taken by renowned artist Hemendranath Majumdar.

10. "Chandrakumar De and his colleagues were no trained linguists or even dialectologists, and had particularly no knowledge of correct orthography in which the individual works should be transcribed. Neither was Dineshchandra Sen a man with such a qualification and training; and moreover, he was not a native from Mymensingh, his knowledge of the actual dialect spoken in Mymensingh being a bit uncertain." Bengali Folk ballads from Mymensingh pp. 15.)

One year before his death, that is in 1945, he left Calcutta and settled down in his own house at Mymensingh, where he died at the age of 65, of apoplexy in the month of Agrahayan in 1353 B. S. (December 1946 A.D.).

He got enough of honours during his life time and will be remembered owing to his services to the cause of Folklore Research in Bengal for the collection of Mymensingh ballads. His life teaches us a lesson for the sincerity and love for a cause.

It will not be out of place to mention here that as he was a diligent field worker so he was an able creative writer. He had written numbers of poems. He also tried to write short-stories dramas and novels based on village theme and atmosphere. But his creative faculty and work has been shelved to his collection work of folklore.

## Bibliographical Notes

How Chandrakumar regarded Kedarnath Majumdar can be ascertained quoting his writing appeared in Kedar Memorial Number of 'Saurabh'. He writes :—

‘সৌরভ’ সম্পাদক কেদারনাথ মজুমদার আমার দীক্ষাগুরু। সৌরভে একদিন তিনিই আমার হাতেখড়ি দিরাছিলেন...কয়েক বৎসর পূর্বে আমি যখন উন্মাদরোগে আক্রান্ত হই, তখন তিনি আমাকে আনিবার জন্য দুইবার বহু অর্থব্যয় করিয়া আমার বাড়ীতে গাড়ী পাঠান। বলা বাহুল্য, তখন এতদকালে রেলগাড়ী ছিল না। দুইবার অজ্ঞানতাবশতঃ তাঁহার অবাচিত দান প্রত্যাখান করি। আমি পাগল হইয়া কাজের বাহিরে গিয়াছি একথা জানিয়াও তিনি আমাকে লইবার জন্য তৃতীয়বার গাড়ী পাঠান। এবার তাঁহার নিকট বাইতে সমর্থ হই। প্রায় তিন মাস তিনি আমাকে তাঁহার গৃহে রাখিয়া চিকিৎসা করান তাঁহারই নিজ ব্যয়ে। জানি না, ময়মনসিংহ-বাসী তাঁহাদের এই বিরাট কর্মোপলব্ধির স্মৃতিচিহ্ন রাখিবার কি আরোজন করিয়াছেন। জানি না জীবিতাবস্থায় কেদারনাথ তাঁহার দেশবাসীর নিকট হইতে কতটুকু সাহায্য পাইয়াছেন। মরিলে “চিত্তার মঠ” দিরা কী হইবে। কেদারনাথের কীর্ত্তিতত্ত্ব কেদারনাথ। আমি শক্তিহীনের মত বতর্দিন ঘটনা থাকিব, ততদিন ঐকি ভাঙ্করাচার্য্য ফিডারাসের মত খোদিত দেবতা জিরাসের স্তূপের মত, তাঁহার স্মৃতি মনোমন্দিরে রাখিয়া পূজা করিব।

হে দেবতা! হে মহান! হে পিতা! আজ তুমি কোথায়। যেখানেই থাক, এই অকৃতজ্ঞ মরাবসের অকৃতজ্ঞ তত্ত্বের অর্থ গ্রহণ কর। আমার কমা কর।”

The following ballads were collected from villages of Mymensingh district (now in East Pakistan) by Chandrakumar De.

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|-----------------------------------|---|
| (1) "Mahuya" Maimansinha-gitika   | pp. 3-42, 790 verses.<br>sent to Dr. Sen on 9. 3. 1921  |
| (2) "Maluya" Do                   | pp. 45-100, 1281 verses sent<br>to D. C. Sen on 30. 10. 1921.   |
| (3) "Kamala" Do                   | pp. 121-170. 1184+24 verses<br>sent to Sen on 4. 7. 1921  |
| (4) "Dewan-Bhaba" Do              | pp. 173-191, 378 verses sent<br>to Dr. Sen in 21, 9. 1922.  |
| (5) "Rupabati" Do                 | pp. 239-260. 468 verses sent<br>to Dr. Sen on 30. 3. 1920.  |
| (6) "Kanko-O-Lita" Do             | pp. 263-312, 1194 verses.<br>(No date about time of collect-<br>ing available).                               |
| (7) "Dewane Madina" Do            | pp. 351-387, 822 verses.<br>(No. data ),  |
| (8) "Dhopar Pat" Purbabang gitika | pp. 3-28. 471 verses. sent to<br>Sen on 15. 11. 1924.   |
| (9) "Maisal-Bandhu" Do            | pp. 31-78, 497+343 verses.<br>sent to Dr. Sen on 7. 11. 1923.<br>(1st version 7. 1. 1924, second<br>version)* |
| (10) "Bheluya" Do                 | pp. 141-207. 1496 verses<br>(No date or time)   |
| (11) "Kamalranir Gan" Do          | pp. 211-230, 346 verses<br>sent to Dr. Sen 30. 8. 1925  |
| (12) "Dewan Isa Khan Masadali"    | pp. 349-390, 846 verses<br>(No date on time).   |
| (13) "Firoz Khan Dewan"           | pp. 435-478, 846 verses.<br>(No date or time).  |
| (14) "Ayna-Bibi" Do               | pp. 191-217, 510 verses.<br>sent sometime in 1925.  |
| (15) "Syam Raya-Pala" Do          | pp. 273-294. 397 verses.<br>(Collected between 1922-1925).  |
| (16) "Baratirther-gan" Do         | pp. 515-526. 156 verses.<br>(No date).  |
| (17) "Siladebi" Do                | pp. 47-70, 521 verses. sent to<br>Dr. Sen in Oct/1927.  |
| (18) "Andha-Badhu" Do             | pp. 185-207, 459 verses<br>collected in March, 1930.  |

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\* The ballad 'Chandrabati' appeared in *Maimansinha-gitika* pp. 103-18  
is a collection of Chandrakumar.

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|------|-----------------------|--|
| (19) | "Bagular Baromasi"    | pp. 211-232. 423 verses<br>collected in April, 1930. |
| (20) | "Ratan Thakurer Pala" | pp. 323-37, 252 verses.<br>collected in 1931.        |
| (21) | "Pir Batasi" Do       | pp. 341-364. 512 verses<br>collected in 1931,        |
| (22) | "Malayar Baromasi"    | pp. 405-424. 432 verse.<br>(No date of time).        |
| (23) | "Jiralani" Do         | pp. 427-51. 559 verses.<br>(No date of time),        |
| (24) | "Sonarayer-Janma" Do  | pp. 467-280 verses,<br>(No data),                    |

In his book "Bengali Folk-Ballads from Mymensingh and the problem of their authenticity" D. Zbavitel writes : "The discovery of these beautiful songs was too much surprising, however, not to arouse suspicions regarding their authenticity. These suspicions seem to have been aroused, first, by the language of the poem : obviously the dialect used in the ballads and recorded as it was, cannot be considered, in the full extent, as the dialect spoken in the Mymensingh District...After careful consideration. I decided to confine my analysis to ballads originating in Mymensingh District". In the conclusion he remarked :

"1. The arguments of supporting the attack of various scholars on the authenticity of the Mymensingh ballads are far from convincing, when confronted with the results of detailed analysis of the texts. There are feasible explanations for the fact that the ballads, in the form in which they were collected and edited, do not survive today, the linguistic grounds put forward do not prove anything and the so-called romantic colouring of the ballad is not out of keeping with the spirit of Bengali folk-poetry, but only with the spirit of Bengali classical poetry to which, of course, the Mymensingh ballads do not belong.

2. The ballads could not have been given their present form by Chandrakumar De as suspected by some people, nor by any other modern individual. They have, to a large extent, preserved individuality of various folk poets. Moreover, some of the ballads were collected by other collectors and yet do not differ considerably from those sent to D. C. Sen by Chandrakumar De. There are, besides, testimonies by various persons who themselves heard the ballads in their youth or childhood, as well as articles in the Mymensingh journal *Saurabh* in which not the least of a doubt is expressed as to the authenticity of the ballads....."

## INDEX

- .Abanindranath Tagore 99, 100, 102,  
     118, 144  
 Achyut Tattwanidhi 98  
 Abdul Karim Sahitya Bisharad 29  
 Aetiological 65, 66  
 Akshaykumar Baral 100  
 Akshaykumar Sarkar 116  
 "Alakshika Chitra" 120  
 All India Folk Song and Dance  
 Society 141  
 Anandamath 138  
 Anderson, J. D. 91, 92, 117  
 "Annadamangal" 32  
 Annie Besant 24  
 Antiquarianism 54  
 Antithetical 26  
 Aryans 42  
 Asiatic Society (Royal) 22, 23  
 "Aswamedh Jajna" 97  
 Asok Mitra 148  
 Asutosh Choudhury 102  
 Asutosh Mukherjee (Sir) 100, 103  
     107, 166  
 Auden 20  
 Aukshoykumar Dutta 22
- "Bamungachi Fire Case" 146  
 "Bandhab samaj" 120  
 Bangiya Loka Sanskrit Parisad 123  
 "Banga Sahitya Sammelan" 106,  
     113, 122  
 "Bangalar Kathasahitya" 115, 120  
 "Bangiya Bijnan Parisad" 120, 121,  
     122  
 Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya 156  
 Basantaranjan Roy 29  
 Bendon, Cecil (Sir) 10  
 Benfey Theodor 104  
 Bengal Bratachari Society 147  
 Bengal Peasant life 8, 12, 13, 16, 29  
 Bengali Literary Conference 113  
 Benoy Sarkar 133  
 Benoy Sarkar's Baithake 133  
 Bernard Shaw, George 24  
 Bethune Society 9  
 Bengal Partition Movement 131  
 "Bharatiya Loka Nritya Samitee" 146  
 "Bhehua" song 153  
 Bhudev Mukhopadhyaya 22  
 Bihari Lal Chakravarti 102  
 Bijoyratna Sen 100  
 Birchandra Manikya 99  
 Biswaraj Dhanwantari 29  
 Boys Scouts movement 128  
 Brahmaputra 159  
 Brahmo Samaj 9, 22, 53  
 Brajasundar Sanyal 29  
 Brojendranath Seal 162  
 'Brata' 136  
 Bratachari 105, 128, 132, 140, 142  
 Bratachari Society 128, 136, 139  
 "Bratakatha" 111, 116, 171  
 "Brihat Katha" 32  
 Burgis 55  
 B. S. Guha 54
- Calcutta Mudrassa (The) 22  
 Carey, W. (Dr.) 9, 22  
 Catechist 9  
 Chandranath Basu 96  
 Chintaharan Chakravarty 29  
 "Chida" 97  
 Charl 136  
 Chuar Rebellion 22
- "Dahi" 97  
 Dandi movement 146  
 •David Hare 5, 6, 8  
 Debendranath (Tagore) 23, 44  
 Dhali 134

- "Dhuti" (*Dhoti*) 97, 132  
 Dixon, R. B 55  
 Dostoevsky 26  
 Duff, Alexander 4  
 Duff, Rev. (Dr.) 2, 4, 8, 12  
 Durgadas Bandyopadhyaya 132  
 Dwijendralal Ray 100  
  
 "Eastern Bengal Ballads" 171  
 "Ekomebadwitiyam" 1  
 Ethnographic Survey of India 54  
 Elliot 26  
 Eshwarchandra Vidyasagar 22, 53  
  
 Fazlul Haq A. K. 148  
 Folk Dance Festival 127, 128  
 "Folk Tales of Bengal" 8, 12, 29  
  
 Gagan Harkara 35, 114  
 Gaganendranath Tagore 99  
 Gauguin 26  
 Garo Hills 159  
 "Gitikatha" 116, 122  
 "Ghatu" songs 152  
 "Gorakhnath" 172  
 "Govinda Samanta"  
     (Bengal Peasant life) 11, 12, 13,  
     14, 15, 16  
 Gayen 164  
 Grierson (Sir) 99, 100  
  
 Haraprasad Sastri 100, 158  
 Haridas Palit 29  
 Hara-Parvati 32  
 Hebrew 9  
 Hindu College 6, 7  
 'Hindu Mela' 23  
  
 Ibsen 26  
 Indian P.E.N. 161  
  
 Jaladhar Sen 100  
 James Joyce 26  
 Janendranath Gupta 129  
  
 'Jana-Sahitya' 28  
 'Janapada-Sahitya' 20  
 Jarl 134  
 Jatra 34  
 Jaykissen Mookerjee 39  
 Jibendra Kumar Dutta 29  
 Jogendranath Sarkar 33  
 Jones, Balys 118  
  
 Kaliprosad Ghosh 156  
*Kantha* 135  
*Katchari* 14  
 Katha-saritsagar 32  
 "Kavyananda" 120  
 "Kayastha" 134  
 Keshabchandra Sen 22, 23  
 Krishna Mohan Banerjee (Rev.) 4  
  
 Lalan Shah (Fakir) 35, 114  
 Latin 9  
 Loka-Vrata" 28  
 "Loka-Vijnan 28  
 "Loka-Charya" 28  
 "Loka-yana" 28  
 "Loka Sanskriti" 28  
 Lenin 26  
 Lytton (Lord) 23  
  
 Macpherson. G. 2, 11, 13, 16  
 Madhusudan Dutta (Michael) 2, 22,  
     53  
 Maeterlinck, Maurice 100  
 Mahabharat 32, 98, 156  
 "Malua" 166, 169  
*mathor* 15  
 "Mauska" 167  
 "Mahuya" 166  
 Mahatma Gandhi (Gandhiji) 24, 25  
     146  
 Manindrachandra Nandy 99  
 Marshman 6, 9  
 Max Muller 23  
 Mecauley 164  
 "Malanchamala" 116

"Maharashtra Jibang Prabhat" 132  
 "Manashadebir Bhasan" 97  
 "Manasar" Bhasan ' 32  
 "Mangal Kavyas" 32, 37  
 Mode, Heinz 41, 91, 104, 118  
 Mokshadaranjan Bhattacharyya 29  
 Morley, Henry 24  
 Murray, Gilbert 24  
 Mymensingh Gitika (Maimansinha-  
 gitika) 102, 105, 153, 165, 171

Nabagopal Mitra 23  
 Nabinchandra Sen 95  
 Nagendranath Basu (Vasu) 100  
 Nandalal Basu 144  
 "Nandan" 120  
 National Congress 115  
 National Theatre 53  
 Nilratan Sarkar 100, 165  
 Nursery-rhymes 36

"Padma" 114  
 "Padmabat" 97  
 "Palagan" 164, 168  
 Palli Sampad Raksha Samittee 146  
*Panchatantra* 104  
 "Parankatha" 152  
 Pasternak 33  
 Patua 141  
*Phudius* 159  
 Prabasi Banga Sahitya Sammelan  
 147  
 Picasso 26  
 Pound Ezra 24  
 Pravashchandra Bhattacharya 29  
*Pujarini* 134  
*Punthis* 89, 90, 97, 98, 104  
 "Puranas" 156  
 "Purba Banga-gitika" 171

Radcliffe Award 131  
 Radha-Krishna 152  
 Radhagobinda Basak 41  
 Radhakishore Manikya 99  
 Rajanikanta Gupta 29, 96, 100

Rajnarayan Basu 22  
 Rajendrakumar Majumdar 29  
 Rakhalia songs 152  
 Ram Sita 32  
 Ramayana 32, 156  
 Ramkrishna Mission 138  
 Ramendrasundar Trivedi 33, 100  
 Rameshchandra Datta 128  
 "Raybenshe" (Raibenshe) 133, 134  
 Ramtanu Lahiri 101  
*Rayats* 13  
 Risely, Herbert (Sir) 54  
 Romain Rolland 24, 100  
 Rolland Madelline 103  
 Ronaldsay (Lord) 170, 171  
 Roman Catholic priest 11  
 Rothenstein 24  
 R. P. Chanda 55

Sadler, Michael (Sir) 147  
 "Sahitya Tirtha" 120  
 "Sahityer Jamakharach" 172  
 Saratkumar Roy 99  
 Sarojnalini Narimangal Samittee 12  
 127, 143  
 Samarendranath Tagore 99  
 Sarala Debi 100  
 Saratchandra Basu 148  
 Satyendranath Tagore 128  
 Sott, Basil (Sir) 59  
 Sarada Devi 23  
 Shyamaprosad Mukherjee 105, 147,  
 148  
*Sisu Sahitya Parishad* 120  
 "Smriti" 156  
 Smith, T. (Dr.) 9  
 Spender 26  
 Sri Aurovindo 24  
 Stalin 26  
 "Srihatta Sammelani" 130  
*Sruti* 156  
 Subarna Banik Samaj 2  
 Swadeshi Movement 44, 115



- Syed Ahmed Khan (Sir)** 23  
**Sylvain Levi** 90, 100, 102  
**Swami Vivekananda** 138  
**Swarnakumari Devi** 116
- Tajmahal** 123  
***Tattvabodhini Sabha*** 22  
***Tattvabodhini Patrika*** 22  
**Temple, Richard** 13, 116  
**Thompson, Rivers (Sir)** 10  
**Thompson, Stith** 118  
**Tilak** 24  
**"Tol"** 154  
**Tolstoy** 26  
**"Tripatra"** 172  
**Trotsky** 26
- Uncle Tom's Cabin** 15  
**Upendrakrishore (Raychaudhury)**  
 29
- University of Calcutta** 57, 89, 100  
 101, 102, 103, 105, 117, 121, 147,  
 167, 170  
**Upisnahad** 156  
**Upapurān** 155
- Vaishnab belief** 43  
**Vaishnab Padabali** 94  
**Vedas** 156
- Wells H. G.** 24  
**Woodburn, John (Sir)** 59  
**West Bengal Pradesh Congress** 121
- Yeats, William Butler** 24  
**Youghusband, Francis (Sir)** 147
- Zbavitel, Dusan** 37, 40, 103, 173  
**Zeus** 159  
**Zimmer, Heinrich** 41













